Press-Citizen Interface in a Fragile Society: Mapping Press and Citizen Discourses on Election Violence during Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Zimbabwe, 2000-2013

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ABSTRACT

Many African countries have been holding regular elections since the "Third Wave" of democratisation which reintroduced multi-party politics on the African continent, but few of these elections meet the democratic litmus test, due to, among other factors, the prevalence of election violence. The press has been justifiably or unjustifiably indicted for these imbroglios on account of alleged transgressions linked to its overt or covert incitement to violence. In the ensuing political contestations, citizens bear the burden of diminished prospects of credible information occasioned by a highly politicised press. In the Southern African region, there is no better case to illustrate the entanglement of the press in electoral contestations than Zimbabwe. This study is a qualitative exploration of press and citizen discourses on election violence during the presidential and parliamentary elections held in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2013. A Foucauldian discursive analytic approach was used to analyse the representation of election violence in two-state-owned and four privately-owned newspapers during presidential and parliamentary elections held over the specified period spanning thirteen years. The study also examined how these press discourses interrelate with citizen discourses. Empirical data were drawn from a corpus of archival textual data comprising hard news and feature articles published in *The Herald*, *The Sunday Mail*, *The Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Financial Gazette*, *Newsday* and the *Daily News*. In-depth interviews were conducted with purposively targeted journalists and editors from the selected newspapers. In addition, in-depth-interviews were held with twenty-one (21) regular newspaper readers who were also politically engaged citizens. The main observation was that press representation of election violence was marked by antagonistic discursive practices reflective of the rivulets of political and ideological bifurcation. Consequently, competing and politically expedient journalistic philosophies emerged. The state-owned press used a model of 'national interest' journalism while the privately-owned press preferred the 'human-rights' model which crystallized into an over-arching 'activist journalism'. This 'activist' journalistic approach found expression through an array of anti-democratic press discursive practices epitomised by selectivity, silence and salience, the consequence of which was that citizens were starved of credible and impartial information. This thesis argues that the anti-democratic discursive practices deployed by the press camps blunted the citizenry's critical engagement with the exact motivations, causes and manifestations of election violence. These anti-democratic discursive practices have a potential to engender a culture of political intolerance with long-term consequences that predispose society to political conflict rather than consensus building.

KEY WORDS: Activist Journalism; Anti-democratic Practices; Citizens; Election Violence; Press; Discursive Construction; Human Rights; Political Culture; National Interest; Zimbabwe

DECLARATION

I Tendai, Joseph Chari, hereby declare that this thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Media Studies at the University of Witwatersrand hereby submitted by me has not been submitted for a Degree at this or any other University, that it is my own work in design and execution, and that all reference material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

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Signature Date

28 July 2016

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father, Jervas Mupotaringa, a visionary and a community leader.

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It is not possible to complete a study of this nature without the contribution of other people. Countless people contributed towards the completion of this thesis in various ways. I wish to acknowledge their efforts.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
AMH	Alpha Media Holdings
ANZ	Associated Newspapers Zimbabwe
AU	African Union
BOP	Balance of Payment
BSA	Broadcasting Services Act
CAZ	Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe
CC	Constitutional Commission
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CFU	Commercial Farmers Union
CNG	Community Newspapers Group
CNP	Community Newspapers Publishing
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECK	Electoral Commission of Kenya
EISA	Electoral Institute of Southern Africa
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
EU	European Union
FPTP	First -Past -The Post

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNU	Government of National Unity
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMPI	Information Media Panel of Inquiry
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDIF	Media Development Investment Fund
MIC	Media and Information Commission
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MMPSA	Media Monitoring South Africa
MMPZ	Media Monitoring Programme Zimbabwe
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PF ZAPU	Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
PR	Proportional Representation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency

SMD	Single Member District
SRC	Student Representative Council
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UANC	United African National Council
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America
VOP	Voice of the People
WVCF	War Victims Compensation Fund
ZAMPS	Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZIANA	Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency
ZIDERA	Zimbabwe Democracy Economic Recovery Act
ZIMPAPERS	Zimbabwe Newspapers
ZIMRIGHTS	Zimbabwe Human Rights
ZMC	Zimbabwe Media Commission
ZMMT	Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust
ZNWVA	Zimbabwe National War Veterans Association
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study uses the discursive analytic approach to examine press and citizen discourses on election violence during Zimbabwe's presidential and parliamentary elections held between 2000 and 2013. The period is significant in that the country went through immense socio-economic and political turmoil which attracted unprecedented domestic and international media attention. How the local press discursively constructed election violence and how citizens interacted with and interrogated these discursive constructions are questions that are germane to this thesis.

The assumption behind this thesis is that, despite the considerable public attention accorded to election violence and the media in public discussions there is a dearth of academic attention on the topic (Wolfsfeld 1992, 1) be it in the media in general or the press in particular. This is troubling given the fact that electoral contests in Africa, particularly in "weak" and "fragile" states (Sisk 2008) are increasingly punctuated by election violence, vindicating those who are skeptical about the prospects of democratic consolidation on the African continent[1].

The 2007/2008 Kenyan post-election violence, the 2008 violent presidential run-off in Zimbabwe and the 2010/2011 Ivorian post-election crisis (the bloodiest electoral conflict in Africa to date) have given renewed impetus to the so-called "Rwandan Model", (Onyebadi and Ojedeyi 2011) the belief that the media in Africa fuel conflicts, the consequence being that elections in Africa are increasingly being viewed as a "curse" (Motsamai, 2010, 2) rather than a mechanism for conflict resolution.

[1] The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, for example notes that there has been preponderance of violent electoral conflict on the African continent, examples being Kenya in 2007/2008 , Zimbabwe (2008), Nigeria (2007), Lesotho (2007), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (2006), Togo (2005), Zanzibar (2005) and Guinea-Bissau 2008) and Ivory Coast in 2010.

The situation is more delicate in fragile societies bedeviled by deep-seated social, economic and political cleavages, and as Sisk (2008, 1) opines, elections present "palpable dilemmas" in that, while they provide the citizenry with avenues for democratic participation, they have become rarefied fields for violent conflicts. Biegon, (2009, 2) concurs, adding that:

> Africa seems to be under a constant curse of electoral violence that hangs precariously over the continent ready to strike at the slightest provocation. As such, it is often the case that elections in the continent are approached with much trepidation. As ironically put, 'the fear of elections is the beginning of political wisdom'. In essence, elections are periods during which the stability and security of African states hang in the balance. They are events that lay bare the political fragility of a majority of African states, even those that have long been considered stable and touted as bastions of peace.

Exactly what role the media play in election violence, and how, is a conundrum that remains unresolved as current empirical evidence is inconclusive. However, two competing narratives appear to have gained traction. On the one hand, there is the liberal democratic model of the press which accentuates the watchdog function of the press pivoted on positive instrumentalisation of the media's monitoring or "burglar alarm" journalism (McQuail 2013, 110), whereby the media are assumed to foster electoral accountability through protection of civil and political liberties and shining its spotlights into the dark alleys of powerful institutions (Norris 2000). On the other hand, there is the so-called 'Rwanda Model'[2] (Onyebadi and Ojedeyi 2011) whereby the media in Africa face wholesale indictment for escalating conflicts on the continent. Findings in this thesis neither confirm the normative liberal function nor support the 'Rwanda Model' in its totality.

[2] The media in Rwanda have been accused of inciting hatred that led to the 1994 Rwanda/Burundi genocide

It is indisputable that the way in which the media represent electoral conflicts influences the electoral dynamics and outcomes of electoral conflicts. The exact role played by the media in these conflicts requires more unpacking. Vladisavljevic correctly observes that:

> By reporting on some conflicts but not others, and by representing conflicts they report on in particular ways, the media strongly influence the dynamics and outcomes of conflicts, and thus also shape the prospects of success of conflict parties. That is why participants in conflicts- including state officials, armed rebels and other warring sides, political parties, social movements, workers on strike and pro-democracy activists in authoritarian states- aim to exploit the media to foster their goals by adapting their activities to the logic of media operation (Vladisavljevic 2015, 2).

Much as this statement has some semblance of truth it is not clear what type of media does what, how and under what circumstances or context. How the press in fragile societies exercises its discretionary power of selecting, framing and interpreting election violence and how its discourses are interrogated lies at the core of this thesis. The thesis argues that by asserting their discursive power through privileging particular ways of social reality (Street 2001, 233), about election violence, the different press camps make particular meanings of election violence common cause.

The discursive construction of election violence by state-owned and privately-owned press, therefore, constitutes distinct ways of seeing, or "regimes of truth" reflective of equally competing values and ideologies. However, these discourses are not immune to the counter-hegemonic contestations of the citizens who also construct parallel discourses on election violence. This thesis elaborates how power is distributed and negotiated in the political communication process.

Gurevitch and Blumler (1995) accuse previous studies on political communication of either underemphasizing or overemphasizing a single component of political communication, thereby obfuscating rather than illuminating the subtle interactions between the various elements of the political communication process.

Negrine (1996, 101) contends that the audience have been seriously marginalized in political communication studies, in spite of them being an integral element of the political communication process and always lurk in the background or simply have a "phantom existence". Similarly, Pfetch and Esser (2012) observe that it is not only the political actors who are important in political communication, but also the public "to whom the messages are directed".

According to Gurevitch and Blumler (1995) we should not undermine or over-privilege any element of the political communication process. This thesis, therefore, brings press and citizen discourses on election violence into a dialogue so as to deepen the understanding of the political communication process. Examining press and citizen discourses on election violence is one way of 'bringing back' the audience into the political communication process so as to broaden the understanding the political communication process.

1.2 Aim of Study

The aim of this study was to critically examine press and citizen discourses on election violence during presidential and parliamentary elections held in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2013 with a view to broadening the insights on the role of the press in political conflicts in general and election violence in particular. A Foucauldian discursive analytical approach was adopted to capture the total ambience in which the press functions and to make sense of the meanings of election violence, and how those meanings are contested by the citizens. The investigation was driven by one over-arching research question and three sub-questions thus:

- How did the press discursively construct election violence during Zimbabwe's Presidential and Parliamentary elections held between 2000 and 2013?
- How do citizens interact with press discursive constructions of election violence?
- In what way do press discourses on election violence intersect with or differ from citizen discourses?
- What are the potential implications of the press's discursive constructions of election violence on democracy and citizenship?

The main question is addressed in two chapters, namely Chapter Five and Six, while the sub-questions are dealt with in Chapters Seven and Eight. In order to address the question, a corpus of textual data comprising hard news and feature articles from the selected newspapers (see below) and textual data from interviews with editors and journalists of these newspapers were used (see Chapter Three for a detailed methodological framework). The Foucauldian discursive analytic approach adopted in this study (see Chapter Two and Three), implied that the thesis was confined to mapping out patterns of discourse, and not the volume of the representations of election violence in the newspapers selected for this study during specified elections.

1.3 Motivation

There is growing concern in Africa that election violence is becoming a key component on the "menu of manipulation" (Schedler 2002, 36) and that the media are deeply implicated in this process. Such fears were amplified after the Kenyan 2007/ 2008 post-election violence and the Ivorian 2010/2011 and whose humanitarian consequences were too ghastly to contemplate. As a consequence, concerns have been raised about the efficacy of elections as a mechanism for political change in Africa (Biegon 2009, 2). Stremlau and Price (2009, 4) assert that election violence "challenges political transitions, aspects of nation-building and notions of democratization itself". There are numerous reasons why the role of the press in election violence warrants a systematic investigation. Five of these reasons are discussed.

1.3.1 Electoral Biasing Effects

Democracy is premised on the ability of citizens to participate freely in electoral processes in which elections are a mechanism of circulating the nation's political leadership in a peaceful manner. Sisk posits that:

> When successful, electoral processes offer a means of channeling social conflict into debate, persuasion and common rules for choosing authoritative representatives of the people who can serve in executive, legislative and other institutions; elections are in this sense a critical means of social conflict management through peaceful deliberations and decision-making processes, in which "winners" carry out promised platforms and "losers" are given the opportunity to either be represented as a loyal opposition in government or to try again in future competitions (Sisk 2008, 2).

However, when consensus breaks down and the rules of the game are trampled upon, the electoral field is tipped one way or the other. Election violence is one way of tipping the electoral field against the political opponent and has become one of the most effective strategies of "political biasing" (Reif 2011, 8). Whether covert or overt violence is used, the party that employs these electoral biasing strategies gains an unfair advantage which makes the process not to be credible as the outcome may not be representative of the will of the citizens.

The assumption made in this thesis is that through its discursive practices, or through the manner in which it represents incidents of election violence, the press can either be an accessory to electoral biasing or part of the architecture necessary for the leveling of the political playing field. It is, therefore, imperative that a systematic investigation of the press' discursive practices in order to gain insights on the actual role played by the press in election violence.

1.3.2 Humanitarian Implications

Election violence is a destructive force with far-reaching humanitarian consequences. In its path is often a trail of dead bodies, injuries, scars, destruction of property including physical and social infrastructure. The 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya which left more than 1200 people dead and about 350 000 displaced (Biegon 2009, 2). The humanitarian consequences of election violence are not confined to the domestic locality in which the violence takes place, but often have spill-over effects into neighbouring countries and far-flung regions when citizens flee to foreign lands where they become refugees. While the material humanitarian consequences are quantifiable, the breakdown of the social fabric, the trauma, and the subliminal effects of election violence suffered by citizens are unquantifiable and may take long to become manifest. Because humanitarian situations lend themselves to the newsworthiness logic of the media, they often attract phenomenal media attention, but the manner in which the media insert themselves in these struggles is fraught with controversy.

1.3. 3 Security Implications

Election violence has been known to have an affinity with other types of political violence such as wars and prolonged armed conflicts, to the extent that there is a natural proclivity between election violence and prolonged conflicts. Some scholars argue that election violence exacerbates existing conflicts in a country and can lead to "chronic instability" as was the case with the 1992 Angolan elections (Fischer 2007, 7) and the Ivorian elections of 2010 (Davis and Vigan 2013). Election violence can also trigger fresh conflicts, particularly in states that already suffer from social, economic and political fragility. Thus, electoral conflicts may degenerate into full-scale armed conflicts leading to a permanent democratic regression.

In some situations, the aftermaths of election violence may result in perpetual mutual suspicion between social groups, or between citizens and the government. Oucho suggests that the violence which broke out in Kenya in the aftermath of the 2007/2008 post-election violence "fell short of civil war", to the extent that Kenyan citizens could no longer take each other for granted anymore as they continued "to recoil back to their ethnic cocoons after the most difficult time in their lives" (Oucho 2010, 491). This signifies that the country's democratic edifice was shaken to the core and will most probably remain so in the foreseeable future.

Mueller (2011, 103) notes how diffused gang violence beginning in the 1997 and 2002 elections in Kenya led to the state losing its legitimate monopoly of violence, thereby rendering the country vulnerable to the post-election violence which broke out in 2007/2008. This shows that election violence can set in motion permanent instability in a country by fracturing an already fractured state.

1.3.4 Economic Implications

Election violence can deal a serious blow upon the economy of an affected country. The uncertainty brought about by election violence often results in the massive withdrawal of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), thereby resulting in rapid economic decline followed by the concomitant impoverishment of citizens. The old adage which says "Capital is a coward, it doesn't go to places where it feels threatened" holds true in situations where there is election violence.

Election violence impacts negatively on a country's economic activities through delays in imports and exports. For example, the post-election violence in Cote d'IVoire in 2010/2011 in which 3000 people were killed and 150 raped (Davis and Vigani 2013) prevented the exportation of cocoa which is the country's main foreign currency earner (Koko (2009, 78). Some sectors of the economy, such as tourism, are particularly vulnerable to election violence and a country can lose millions of dollars in a very short space of time thus, adversely affecting its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In fragile societies, such disruptions of economic activities can worsen social and economic fragility thereby exacerbating social and political tensions.

1.3.5 Legitimacy

Given that elections have become the most widely recognized benchmark for affirming the legitimacy of a government's democratic credentials, democracy has become synonymous with elections (Schedler 2002; Fischer 2002; Scott and Taylor 2007). Election violence constitutes an assault on the legitimacy of a government and erodes the credibility of institutions tasked with the responsibility of consolidating democracy (Koko 2009, 79). Koko (2009) asserts that election violence is evidence that democracy has not been adequately entrenched.

Election violence undermines a government's legitimacy, if the government is believed to be the perpetrator of the violence. In addition, election violence can be viewed as an indictment on the government's failure to effectively stamp its authority (Koko, 199). The use of election violence undermines the credibility of the winner if they are perceived to have used election violence. In such cases the electoral mandate of the winner may be fraught with a crisis of legitimacy which has a potential to trigger further instability.

In this context the role of the media becomes complicated. Through their framing practices the media shape perceptions about the legitimacy (or the lack of legitimacy) of electoral processes and verdicts. This is the reason why political actors are keen to either control the media or to set the agenda for them. Given that election violence diminishes the integrity of elections; both the incumbent and the opposition may seek to influence the media so that they frame election violence in a manner that suits their political agendas. As pointed out above, the exact role of the media in election violence remains a matter of conjecture and empirical investigations on the impact of different types of media on political conflict remain inconclusive.

In the context of Kenya in 2007/2008, much of the blame is heaped on the broadcast media, particularly those radio stations that broadcast to the people in Kenyan languages, and to some extent the new media (see Mbeke 2009; Ismail and Dean 2008 BBC World Service Trust 2008). Whether the press or any other media could be accused of exactly the same transgression is debatable, at least if the existing literature is anything to go by (see Chapter Two).

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study seeks to make a contribution to an emerging body of literature on media and political conflict in fragile societies. As correctly observed by Vladisavljevic (2015, 1) much of the existing literature on the subject mainly focuses on media representation of domestic conflicts in developed counties of the West, while very few, (if any) studies focus on the experiences of non-western countries. As a consequence of that, there exists a lacuna in terms of knowledge about the role played by the news media in political conflicts. Vladisavljevic's observation that "media coverage of political conflict can only be understood in a context" (2015, 1) is quite plausible in that, the way in which the press frame political conflict is shaped by a complex tapestry of factors, among them, political, economic, historical and social. To this extent, the concept of societal "fragility" used in this thesis (see Chapter Two) accentuates the uniqueness of the political circumstances in which the elections were conducted in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2013.

The assumption made in this thesis is that the political and economic context in which elections were held in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2013 were significant in many respects (see Chapter Four). Arguably, there is no African country outside a war zone, whose domestic politics has attracted more international attention than Zimbabwe, during the period in question. A detailed outline of this political context is discussed in Chapter Four. As pointed out above, empirical evidence on the role of the media in election violence is inconclusive. The reliance on Western liberal democratic models in explaining the role of the media in political conflict has not yielded much in terms of theoretical headway and superimposing them in non-Western and transitional contexts has been misleading (Vladisavljevic 2015,1).

It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to complement the existing body of knowledge on the role of the media in political conflicts by focusing on Zimbabwe, a non-Western country with considerable historical, economic and geo-political significance.

The findings made in this thesis can contribute to building theory on the role of the media in political conflicts in general and in election violence in particular. One finds merit in the view of some scholars who disapprove of the wholesale application of the Anglo-American model of journalism, which is based on liberal-democratic precincts (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Burger 2002; Shaw 2009). Berger's call for developing "original theory based on African experiences to precisely explain these experiences more accurately-and act on them to advance the cause of democracy on the continent" (cited in Shaw 2009, 505) resonates with the broad thrust of this thesis.

The discursive analytic approach adopted in this thesis is a marked departure from previous studies on media and elections (see Chapter Two) in terms of its shift in focus from the realm of journalistic practices and normative ideals to the meaning-construction domain. As a discursive formation, election violence becomes a terrain upon which meanings are constructed, deconstructed and contested. The assumption behind this assertion is that the press is an ideological agency which co-constructs meaning with the audience. An ancillary assertion holds that whatever meaning emerges out of this process is a 'negotiated settlement'. Further, focusing on discursive practices made it possible to transcend the narrow lens of news framing and understand election violence as something intertwined with the everyday political cultural practices of society.

The thesis opens new pathways for theorizing election violence and the media using different methodological and theoretical approaches. Rather than simply focusing on the efficacy of journalistic messages (Louw 2001, 205) during elections, the thesis executes a critical examination of the discursive practices of the press and how they intersect with citizen discourses. Bringing press and citizen discourses on election violence into dialogue is one way of responding to Blumler and Gurevitch's call not to "under, or over-emphasize any single element of the political communication" (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, 4).

As privileged discursive actors the audiences (citizens) are not just passive consumers of press messages, but actively construct meanings about election violence and critique information that they get from the press. As demonstrated in this thesis, rather than being constructed by the press, citizens have agency and are able to construct new meanings about the reality of election violence. These meanings are counterpoints to the discursive constructions of the press.

1.5 Why the Press?

The aim of this study as previously indicated was to critically examine press and citizen discourses on election violence. The focus of analysis was purposively sampled hard news and feature articles published six weeks before and two weeks after each election and selected for the study (see Chapter Three). The press in Zimbabwe constitutes a formidable institution for shaping public opinion and perceptions about politics.

The six newspapers selected for this study (see below) have over the years proven to be the key opinion leaders in Zimbabwe. They each have a wide national distribution network, and editorially, have distinct ideological positions that are representative of the diversity of Zimbabwe's polity. These ideological differences were made apparent in the competing discourses on election violence. The newspapers have not only been consistent in terms of publication, but have maintained the same editorial policies over the period under study. The fact that the elections being studied span a period of thirteen years, each of them being held in a context marked by the progressive escalation of the political and economic crises, made it possible to tease out ideological nuances in the discursive constructions of election violence in the press. It was possible to make comparisons in relation to subtle shifts by the different newspapers over time. The rationale for focusing on the press was that, unlike the broadcasting sector (particularly television) which is monopolized by the state, there is diversity in the press in terms of ownership and views; hence it is easier to compare discourses on election violence. A significant fraction of the Zimbabwean population, particularly in the urban areas, has access to newspapers and the country's high literacy rate (see the discussion in Chapter Three), means that newspapers are well-supported in terms of readership.

Although newspapers have fewer followers than radio, they are, nevertheless, read largely by an economically and politically significant elite class that commands considerable influence in shaping public opinion on political affairs. The opinion leadership position of this social class in Zimbabwean politics is significant.

Apart from an active interest in political matters, regular newspaper readers influence public opinion through word of mouth. In this thesis it is these readers who are referred to as "citizens" on account of their being active participants in political issues through actively seeking information. The term is used in this thesis for analytical purposes to reflect their epistemic status of the citizens in news politics (see Chapter Three on the sampling procedure used).

Government's keenness to control the press in the context of mounting opposition testifies to the indisputable potency of the press in influencing public opinion in Zimbabwe. There is evidence to show that despite the threat posed by new media, the press still occupies a critical place in African societies as newspapers are read by a significant size of the population. Newspapers are shared by family members and friends and are also used to cement social relationships. In addition, many people still prefer to read the printed newspaper for news and information (Chari 2011). Below is a brief synopsis of the six newspapers selected for this study.

- *The Herald* is a mass market daily newspaper owned by the Zimbabwe Newspapers Group (Zimpapers) (1980) Ltd, a publicly listed company owned by the Zimbabwean government through a trust company called the Zimbabwe Media Trust (IMPI Report 2014). Having been founded in 1892 during the colonial era, it is the oldest newspaper in the country. Like all state-owned newspapers, *The Herald* is overtly pro the incumbent government. The Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS) results for the first half of 2014 indicated that *The Herald* had the highest readership in the country at 26% followed by the Daily News at 15% (IMPI Report 2014).

- *The Sunday Mail* is a mass market weekly newspaper, also owned by Zimpapers and, like its sister paper; *The Herald* was founded during the colonial era. The ZAMPS 2014 survey mentioned above put *The Sunday Mail* readership at 19% of the readership. Like *The Herald*, *The Sunday Mail* is overtly pro-government and espouses, in its editorial pages a 'nationalist' and "Pan Africanist' ideology.
- *The Daily News* is a mass market daily newspaper owned by the Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ), a private company, and was founded on 31 March 1999 by a consortium of local and foreign businessmen. The newspaper was shut down by the government in September 2003 after refusing to comply with the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (2002) but was re-launched in on 18 March 2011, after being re-registered by the newly-constituted, Zimbabwe Media Commission, during the Government of National Unity (GNU), formed by the ruling party, ZANU (PF) and two of the opposition MDC formations in February 2009. As was before its closure in 2003, the daily News is pro-capital, neo-liberal ideological leaning, highly critical of the ruling party and government and pro-opposition political parties especially the MDC.
- *The Zimbabwe Independent* is a mass market weekly newspaper owned by Alpha Media Holdings (AMH), a private company owned by Trevor Ncube, a Zimbabwean businessman based in South Africa who is also the owner of the *Mail and Guardian* (SA). Ncube owns AMH through Vusumuzi Investments which holds 60% of the shareholding, while the other 39% is owned by the Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF) (IMPI Report, 2014, 61). Although *The Zimbabwe Independent* was originally founded as a "business" newspaper it generally leads with political news. The newspaper subscribes to a neo-liberal market ideology and like the *Daily News* is very critical of the ruling party and government and is pro-opposition. According to ZAMPS results (2014) it readership in the weekly mass marked was 2%.
- *The Financial Gazette* is also a weekly mass market newspaper owned by *The Financial Gazette* (Private) Limited, a company wholly owned by Octadew Investments, a Zimbabwean company owned by former Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor, Gideon Gono.

Like the *Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Financial Gazette* positions itself as a "business" newspaper, but hardly leads with business stories as it usually leads with political stories and covers domestic politics voraciously. It is anti-government, and has been a leader in critiquing ruling party policies. In 2014 ZAMPS results put its readership at 3% of the weekly mass market share (IMPI Report 2014, 53).

- *NewsDay* is a mass market daily newspaper owned by ALPHA Media Holdings owned by Tervor Ncube (see above) and was founded in June 2010, thus ending *The Herald's* monopoly in the daily news market after the closure of the *Daily News* in 2003. The newspaper was launched using funding provided by the Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF, n.d.). Like its sister papers (*The Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Standard*) the paper is also critical of the Zanu (PF) government, but is perceived to be more balanced than the other two, according to respondents who participated in this study. In 2014 ZAMPS rated it number 3 after *The Herald* and the *Daily News*, with a readership of 14% in the daily news market.

The selection of newspapers was largely dictated by the need to cater for ideological diversity and representativity in the newspaper industry. The two state-owned newspapers selected for the study were published consistently throughout the period under consideration. However, only two of the weekly newspapers (*The Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Financial Gazette*) published consistently, after the closure of the *Daily News* in 2003, while Newsday only appeared on the scene in 2010.

The inclusion of more privately-owned newspapers was an attempt to make up for the lacuna in privately-owned daily newspaper coverage after the closure of the *Daily News* in 2003 so as to ensure that there is enough material from privately-owned newspapers. The study did not include newspapers which did not exist at the time of the study such as *The Sunday Mirror*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Weekend Tribune* and *The Daily Tribune* (see Chapter Four). The excluded privately-owned newspapers, even during their existence did not command significant circulation figures and their influence was confined to the urban areas, meaning that they were on the periphery of public opinion formation.

1.6 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is divided into nine chapters and each one of them addresses a particular theme of the study. Chapter One, the introductory chapter, introduces the subject under investigation, that is, press and citizen discursive constructions of election violence during Zimbabwe's presidential and parliamentary elections held between 2000 and 2013. The chapter discusses the aims and motivation of the study and foregrounds the key research questions which drive the study. An outline of the structure of this thesis is also given in this chapter. It is this chapter which sets the research agenda of the thesis by foregrounding existing gaps in the literature on the role of the media in election violence. The main observation made in this chapter is that the discursive construction of election violence by the press and citizens constitutes an exercise in power and knowledge as well as a strategy for countering power.

Chapter Two reviews literature linked to the present investigation and situates the research questions about press and citizen discursive constructions of election violence in a proper context. The chapter also discusses the conceptual framework which underpins the thesis, namely, the Foucauldian concept of Discourse, the Mediation concept and the Social Construction Theory. The chapter also demonstrates how these concepts link up with the literature and the methodology used in this thesis. The main observation made in this chapter is that the bulk of existing literature focuses on wars, terrorism, protests and other types of political violence, particularly in western countries, while there is very little on the press and on election violence. Further, much of the existing violence is tilted towards an assessment of media performance; either extolling or lamenting the media's coverage. There is very little scope for understanding election violence in different contexts such as fragile societies beset by social and political cleavages. The chapter concludes that election violence, as a unique type of political violence is different from other types of political violence in the sense that it takes place in a time- concentrated context and has far- reaching implications for democracy.

Having outlined the theoretical debates around the role of the media in election violence and the theoretical concepts underpinning these debates, Chapter Three outlines the study's research design and approach, methodology, data collection and analysis processes.

The chapter also discusses the researcher's reflexivity and positionality, outlined ethical considerations and study limitations. Given the social constructionist epistemological approach adopted in this study, considerable emphasis was given to accounting for researcher constraints in explicating meanings during the research process.

Chapter Four provides an outline of the broader social, political and economic context in which the thesis is situated. In very expansive strokes, the chapter maps out the socio-political, economic and historical background in which elections were conducted in order to provide a deeper understanding of the forces that shaped discourses on electoral violence in Zimbabwe. The rationale for this is that meanings about elections cannot be divorced from the larger socio-economic context in which they are conducted. The chapter argues that the historical, social, economic and political events compounded by the fragility of the state shaped the meanings, framings, interpretations and articulations about elections and electoral violence during the period under study.

The findings of the thesis are presented in three chapters, and begin in Chapter Five. Chapter Five discusses press discourses on election violence based on the corpus of archival data and interviews with journalists and editors. The Chapter discusses three themes in relation to election violence, namely discourses on levels of election violence, attribution of responsibility, and the Authority-Disorder discourse. The textual data principally addresses the HOW aspect of the research question, i.e., how the selected newspapers discursively constructed electoral violence, while the data from the interviews with journalists and editors are used to answer the WHY component of the research question which sheds light on the rationale for such construction. The chapter argues that state-owned and privately-owned newspapers produced competing discourses about electoral violence pitting a "national interest" discourse and a liberal human rights frame which found expression through a watchdog function of the press against each other. These discourses demonstrate the instrumental logic of electoral violence whereby the press becomes instruments for either retaining or capturing power. In addition, these discursive constructions of electoral violence mirror the contours chalked by the political bifurcation of the Zimbabwean society which became a hotbed for 'activist journalism'.

Chapter Six, is an extension of Chapter Five and discusses additional themes gleaned from the textual data and interviews with media practitioners. The discussion focuses on three themes that relate to the way in which the press sought to either legitimise or de-legitimise elections through particular discursive tropes of election violence, namely memorialization, condemnation and peace advocacy discourses. The chapter argues that, while the state-owned press used these discursive strategies to legitimize electoral verdicts, the privately-owned press used the same to de-legitimise electoral outcomes, thus bringing to the fore the discretionary power of the press in shaping public opinion and perceptions about election violence.

Chapter Seven discusses citizen discourses on election violence based on the data corpus from interviews with 21 purposively sampled citizens who are regular readers of newspapers. The analysis focused on three key questions relating to how citizens make sense of election violence, how they evaluate press reporting of election violence and the normative prescriptions than can guide the press in reporting elections. The chapter argues that citizen discourses on election violence reveal a complex conception of the causes, attributes, and manifestations of election violence that are circumscribed by Zimbabwe's history, social, economic and political context of the country.

Based on a synthesis of observations in Chapter Five, Six and Seven, Chapter Eight compares press and citizen discourses on election violence using three themes as a lens for gaining insights on the interaction between the press and citizens. The ultimate aim was to gain insights on the values, norms, beliefs and practices that underpin discursive constructions of election violence in fragile societies. It was noted that, although press and citizen discourses overlap, in some instances they show a significant disjuncture. The chapter argues that the interface between press and citizen discourses represents a zone in which a society's authentic political culture is produced, contested and altered.

Finally, Chapter Nine gives a summary of and a reflection on the main findings of the thesis and highlighting their implications for theory and journalism practice. The limitations of the study are also discussed in this chapter and areas for further investigation are identified and recommended. In conclusion, the chapter argues that the political instrumentalisation of the press manifested through the "activist" journalism model partly emanates from the lack of an

integrative and unifying, cultural and ethical ethos that could provide Zimbabwean journalists with a common identity and common value system.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter set out the research agenda behind this thesis by situating the study in a context and foregrounding the research questions that drive this study. It discussed the aim of the study, the motivation for the research, the nature of its contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the role of the media in election violence. The chapter also outlined the structure of the thesis and gave a summary of the key concerns in each of the nine chapters.

A brief synopsis of the newspapers was also given highlighting their ownership, editorial and ideological positions as well as their market share position. Two major points emerged from the discussion in this chapter. Firstly, it was observed that elections are increasingly becoming a worrisome trend in Africa and are implicated in democratic reversals on the continent. Secondly, it was noted that as a discursive formation, election violence is a contested arena characterized by competing ideological interpretations.

CHAPTER TWO: ELECTION VIOLENCE AND THE MEDIA: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has two main objectives. Firstly, it reviews literature linked to the present study in order to situate questions about press and citizen discursive constructions of election violence in societies beset by socio-political cleavages, unresolved national questions. Although the specific focus of this thesis is on press and citizen discourses on election violence, the literature reviewed in this chapter encompasses political violence in its broad conception as well as election violence as a specific sub-set of political violence. The rationale for this was that election violence is dictated by newsworthiness, the same logic that characterizes broader political violence; namely, the existence of the element of conflict, and lends itself to the logic of breaking news (Thussu 2009, 15) or as Meadow (2009, 232) puts it, the thinking that "if it bleeds it leads".

Examining literature on political violence helps to shed light on the distinction between political violence in its broader sense and violence which occurs in an electoral context. This is particularly imperative, because, in the Zimbabwean, and arguably in many African contexts, the terms 'political violence' and 'election violence' are used interchangeably in public discussions and in the media as evidenced by the excerpts from the citizens interviewed for this study (see Chapter Seven).

The review focuses on three main aspects of political violence, namely, the causes of political violence, media and political violence in general, and press representation of election violence. The literature reviewed is mainly from a coterie of scholarly publications under the broad rubric of political violence, media and political violence, and media and election violence.

Important inclusions in this coterie of scholarly work are the following publications: the edited volume by Nossek, Sreberny, and Sonwalkar (2007), titled *Media and Political Violence*, Timothy Sisk's article 'Election Violence in Fragile States: Between Voice and Violence' (2008), Scott Straus and Charlie Taylor's article, 'Democratisation and Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990-2007 (2009), Gadi Wolfsfeld's paper 'The Role of the News Media in Unequal Conflicts: From Intifada to the Gulf War and Back Again' (1992) and Uche Onyebadi and Tayo Oyedeji's article titled 'Newspaper Coverage of Post-Election Violence in Africa: An Assessment of the Kenyan example (2011). Secondly, the chapter discusses the conceptual framework underpinning the thesis, namely, mediation, Michael Foucault's concept of discourse, and his Social Construction Theory of the Media, clearly demonstrating how these concepts link up with the literature reviewed and the social constructionist epistemological approach contemplated in this thesis. As argued in Chapter Three, this epistemological approach rests upon the assumption that, rather than simply reflecting reality, the press shapes and constructs reality through its representation of election violence. This representation constitutes a particular body of knowledge or a regime of truth which legitimizes or de-legitimises particular actions.

2.1 The Media and Election Violence Nexus: An Overview

Although there is a continuous flow of literature on media coverage of political violence in its broad sense and in other political conflicts in both the developing and developed world (Alali and Eke 1991; Schlesinger 1991; Miller 1992; Nossek et al 2002; Ryan 2004; Jones 2005; Bogkoff 2006; Ismail and Dean 2007; McCallum 2007; Hobart 2007; Erjavec and Volcic 2007; Ruigrok and Van Atteveldt 2007; Papacharisi and Oliveira 2008; Stremlau and Price 2009, Stremlau et al 2009; Hoerl et al 2009; Thussu 2009; Cissel 2012; Shaw 2012; Shaw 2013; Coesemans 2013) very little scholarly effort has been expended on understanding the representation of election violence from a meaning-construction theoretical perspective. These studies do not dwell on how election violence is implicated and implicates broader social-cultural practices.

Elections are the most widely recognized benchmark for assessing a country's democratic credentials to the extent that democracy has become synonymous with elections (Schedler 2002; Fischer 2002; Scott and Taylor 2007; Reif 2009). The media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and perceptions about the legitimacy or lack of legitimacy of elections through their framing practices, the very reason why political actors are keen to either control the media or to set the agenda for them. Given that election violence diminishes the integrity of elections; both the incumbent government and the opposition may seek to influence the media to frame election violence in a manner that suits their political agenda. Norris (2000, 1) argues that during election campaigns the media "have a responsibility to strengthen democracy through political coverage that should educate the public about the major issues, inform citizens about the contenders for office and mobilize people to turnout". Garcia-Blanco (2011, 177) underscores the importance of the media in electoral campaigns thus:

> The importance of journalism in electoral campaigns is difficult to minimize. During these crucial moments in democratic politics, the media inform citizens about the different candidates, about the relevant debates, and about the issues at stake.

Temin and Smith (2002, 586) posit that "there is a natural proclivity for a symbiotic relationship between the media and political parties" in that, on the one hand, "the media need the exciting political campaigns in order to market their products and on the other, the media provide the much needed publicity and relay the messages of the political parties to the voters. However, regular elections are no longer an adequate barometer of a country's democratic credentials in the sense that legitimacy is requisite for elections to pass the democratic test. The peaceful coexistence of competitors and the ability of citizens to exercise their choice without coercion are indicators for electoral legitimacy (Lindberg 2006, 139).

Through their watchdog function the media help to ensure electoral accountability, protect the civil and political rights of citizens and scrutinize the actions of the state and powerful institutions in society (Norris 2000, 4). Norris further notes that the more popular notions of the press's watchdog role entail championing popular interests and challenging the government of the day (Norris 2000).

The more active role of the watchdog function involves reporting on issues critically, interpreting and evaluating political messages in order to help the readership understand issues in context (Norris, 2000, 5). However, there is a potential conflict between the press's active watchdog role, particularly the interpretive aspect, and journalistic conventions such as factual, balanced and impartial reporting, particularly in the context of election reporting in the sense that the line between 'reporting' and 'interpretation' becomes blurred. This conflict is further observed in relation to the press's function as a civic forum or in Habermasian parlance, a 'public sphere', a forum which facilitates informed deliberation about topical issues and "mediating between citizens and the state" (Norris 2000, 2).

The notion that the press is a conversational arena (Chae 2005) open to all and sundry to express their views freely (Habermas, 1989, Kean, 1991, Curran, 1991) is in contradistinction to one of the observations made in this thesis as discussed in Chapter Five, Six and Seven, that the press used a selective lens in its representation of election violence in Zimbabwe. The reliance on carefully selected and managed news sources by both state and privately-owned state press testifies that there is a need to rethink the concept of the public sphere, in particular, the political contexts.

Optimistic accounts of the public sphere which ascribe educational and informational roles to the media as well as the roles of deepening democracy and good governance (Teshome, 2008; Adriantosa et al, 2005) need to be modified and reconsidered, particularly against the backdrop of growing evidence that the press, particularly in conflict-ridden parts of Africa has been used less as a mechanism for exercising oversight over the state or exposing abuse of official authority (Uzodike and Whetho 2006, 38), or exposing electoral irregularities (Berger, 2009) such as election violence. Rather, they have been used more as organs of public information than tools for managing consensus and promoting consumer culture (McCarthy 1989, xii, Clarke et al, 2007). Thus functionalist accounts about the role of the media during elections in general, and election violence in particular, particularly in the context of Africa are aberrations of the actual practice on the ground, if the recent cases of elections in Kenya and Zimbabwe are anything to go by. Against this backdrop there is a need to bring about a new impetus on theoretical debates about the relationship between the media and election violence in order to expand existing knowledge on the role of the media in the democratisation process.

Willems' call for an alternative "critical research agenda that considers the engagement between media institutions and political actors as a symbiotic relationship that ultimately seeks to legitimize certain election candidates and condone election rituals as democratic events par-excellence" (Willems 2011, 91) is quite plausible. The functionalist approach embedded in neo-liberal democratic normative assessments of the media treats concepts such as elections and democracy as unproblematic (Willems 2012).

The theoretical discursive approach adopted in this thesis enables one to view election violence through the prism of socially constructed reality rather than an 'objectivist' normative perspective whereby the role of the media is viewed as unproblematic; simply entailing innocently reflecting what is happening in society. While the normative democratic model mentioned above assumes that the media are an arena in which public affairs are debated rationally and objectively, the social construction theory accentuates the meaning construction role of the media. Ruigrok and Van Atteveldt (2007, 68) are quite right when they argue that journalists give events meaning "by transforming them into words and images". They are able to do this through a careful selection and presentation process and through their privilege and power to "decide what is important, making the complex reality understandable for their audiences.

Much of the literature on media and political violence mainly focuses on news media framing of different political conflicts such as terrorism (Alexander and Latter 1990; Alexander and Oichard 1991; Alali and Eke 1991; Miller 1992: Ruigrok and Van Attenveldt 2007; Persson 2004; Ryan 2004; Norris et al 2003;". Hobart 2007; Erjavec and Volcic 2007; Papacharisi and Oliveira 2008; Strauss and Taylor 2009; Thussu 2009) ethnic violence (Myers et al 1996; Oberschall 2000; Alozie; 2007; Thompson 2007; McCallum 2007; Melvern 2007; Dowden 2007; Wilkes et al 2010; Chari 2010; Baisely, 2014) street demonstrations and protests (McPhail and Schweingruber 1991; McCarthy et al 1996; Smith et al 2001; Bogkoff 2006; Cottle 2006; Cottle 2008; Cissel 2012; Lynch 2012;), and war (Hallin 1986; Wolfsfeld 1992; Goddard et al 2001; Dimitrova and Stromback 2005; Aday 2005; Ruigrok et al 2005; Murray et al 2008). In spite of this vast literature on broad political violence, very little scholarly attention has been given to electoral violence as a special sub-category of political violence and this has had serious implications for democracy.

The consequence has been the fragmentation of theory (if any) around the relationship between media and election violence, and consequently fuzzy understanding of the actual role of the media in the democratization process. Some scholars have lamented the wholesale application of the Anglo-American liberal democratic model in non-western contexts arguing that its 'one-size-fits-all' approach is problematic (Berger 2002; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Nyamnjoh 2005; Shaw 2009).

Vladisavljevic 2015, 1) notes that some authors claim that the reliance on models developed for established western democracies in non-western settings may be misleading, hence the need to develop" new theories that are more suitable for discerning the role that the media play in democratization".

Such calls are plausible, particularly given the fact that the normative democratic model has not been able to furnish sufficient theoretical insights to explain the role of the media in 'non-democratic' and 'democratizing' states beset by socio-political cleavages. Nyamnjoh (2005, 3) rightly observes that western inspired journalistic models are at odds with the dominant modes of personhood and agency and by extension notions of society, culture and democracy shared by African people because they assume "…that there is One-Best Way of being and doing to which Africans must aspire and to be converted in the name of modernity and civilization".

There are more compelling reasons for charting a research agenda around media and elections in weak and fragile societies, particularly those in Africa in the wake of the increasing prevalence of election-related violence in recent times, forcing some scholars to view elections as a "curse" (Motsamai 2010, 1). Notable cases of election violence include the 2010/2010 Ivorian post-election violence in which over 3000 people were killed, the 2007/2008 election violence in Kenya, the election violence in Zimbabwe (2008), Guinea Bissau (2008) Lesotho, (2007), the Democratic Republic of Congo (2006), Togo (2005) and Zanzibar (2005) (Motsamai 2010) to mention but a few. As demonstrated below, although these cases of election violence have received phenomenal attention in public discussions and the media, only the Kenya 2007/2008 post-election violence has attracted significant academic attention (Anderson 2002; De Smedt 2009; Mbeke 2009; Khadiagala, 2009; Ogenga, 2009; Ojwang 2009; Dercon and Gutierez-Romero 2010; Koko, Merilainen 2012; 2013; Shilaho 2013).

However, because election violence has a close affinity with broader political violence such as war, terrorism, demonstrations and political protests, particularly in relation to the fact that conflict lends all types of political violence to the news agenda, a conceptual understanding of political violence in its broad sense is in order.

2.2. Media and Political Violence: Global and Continental Perspectives

A clear-cut definition of political violence is elusive forcing one scholar to argue that political violence is "a term that suffers from conceptual devaluation or semantic entropy" (Schlesinger (1991, 5). While violence can be conceived as physical harm against human and inanimate objects, a broader definition encompasses its symbolic manifestations such as the hegemonic activities of political actors (Schlesinger 1991).

In its broad sense political violence encompasses a wide range of "deeply contested actions, events, and situations that have political aims and involve some degree of physical force" (Steinhoff and Zwermarn 2008, 213). Such actions include, among other things, politically motivated assassinations, civil wars, military putsches, demonstrations, protests, rebellions, terrorist attacks, guerilla wars, kidnappings, mob-violence, insurrections, national liberation and security policing just to mention a few (Schlesinger 1991; Steinhoff and Zwerman 2008; Meadow 2009, UNDP, 2010).

Moser and Clark (2001, 36) define political violence as the "commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, to obtain or maintain political power" while the UNDP (2010, 2) defines it as "any organized violent or potentially violent activity or coordinated violent reaction to an organized activity to achieve political goals". The latter definition is much broader and encompasses the potential of an action to turn violent is as a form of violence.

De Los Rios (2004) identifies the main motivations of political violence as the desire to defeat a government, the desire to control a particular region or land, religious beliefs, economic interests and the desire to retain or gain power. Many of these causes of violence are rooted in the powerful forces of capitalism and globalization which were accomplished through violent European colonial conquest, slavery, and looting of the resources of African countries. The divide and rule policies of the colonialists left indigenous communities deeply fractured along ethnic and tribal lines (Mamndani 2002).

After colonialism, the hegemonic policies of powerful countries such as the United States of America and Britain were blamed for the perpetuation of violence on developing countries. Where power and control were maintained through the gun during the colonial era, proxies who work in the knowledge industry can accomplish that easily in the 'modern' era through hegemonic apparatus. In the same way that the relationship between the native and the colonialist was sustained through violence, colonialism was uprooted through violence by the former victims (Mamdani 2002) thereby seeding an ideology or "culture of violence" (Jenkins 1998).

The ultimate goal of political violence is the acquisition of power - a means to an end (Moser and Clark, 2001; De Los Rios 2004, Kirwin and Cho 2009) hence power and violence are intricately interwoven (De Los Rios 2004).

The acquisition or retention of political power is the main justification for deploying violence and electoral contests are the arenas where contests for power are vividly amplified.

Political violence in its broad sense has received substantial scholarly attention. Existing studies on political violence largely focus on war, particularly civil war and ethnic wars (Schlesinger 1991; Mamdani 2002; Oberschall 2000), violent protests or demonstrations such as those witnessed at the World Trade Organization conference in Seattle (Boykoff 2006) and the war on terror (Norris and Montague 2003; Papacharissi and Oliveira 2008) and assassinations (Hoerl and Jarvis 2009). The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the September 11, 2001 bombing of the twin towers also inspired a cottage industry of research on political violence (Steuter and Wills 2009; Dimitova and Stromback 2005; Ryan, 2004). Although the specific focus of this thesis is election violence as a special type of political violence which has serious implications on democratic consolidation, it is underpinned by the same rationale as all other forms of political violence, that is, by the retention or acquisition of political power.

An examination of the discursive construction of electoral violence helps to shed insights into how election violence is intertwined in power contests, its links with other conflicts and its consequence in the broader society.

As mentioned in Chapter One, election violence does not only discredit electoral verdicts, it also impinges upon the general integrity of the electoral process. Where it takes a physical form, election violence destroys life and property, polarizes society, scares away investors, undermines peace and can lead to the dispersal of populations. In some situations, if not curbed, electoral violence has the potential to degenerate into full scale conflicts such as civil wars and genocide thereby destabilizing a whole country or region. From a constructionist, discursive perspective, this thesis views political violence as various acts and discursive practices through which power is enacted and challenged in private and public spaces.

2.3. Triggers of Election Violence

Much of the literature which examines the causes of election violence falls under political science/international relations and related disciplines (Sisk 2012; Mueller 2011; Sachikonye 2011; Motsamai 2010; Bekoe 2010; Koko 2009; Kirwin and Cho 2009; Reif 2009; Sisk 2008; Straus and Taylor 2007; Fischer 2002).

In this literature, it is generally acknowledged that elections *per se* do not cause violence but the competitive environment in which they are held creates opportunities to exacerbate existing fault-lines in a particular society (Motsamai 2010; Rao 2014).

The actual triggers of election violence are multifaceted and generally depend on the political context in which the elections are held. However, there is consensus among scholars that the causes of election violence are linked to social structural conditions, electoral system choice, the stakes of political competition, the neutrality and competence of the electoral administration system, and the nature and role of the security sector (Muller, 2011; Sisk 2008; Koko 2009; Motsamai 2010; Rao 2014).

Koko (2009, 67-68) notes that the structural causes of election violence are located within the social fabric and are linked to those characteristics of a society which predispose it to particular political behavior. These include unequal representation and socio-economic development issues occasioned by a legacy of unequal representation.

Thus a long history of political and economic exclusion of a particular group may engender perceptions of victimhood forcing the excluded group to view elections not, as a mechanism for electing a government but a mechanism to "overcome their unfortunate predicament (Koko 2009, 68). This raises the stakes higher during elections and emotions can run high and degenerate into election violence if the situation is not managed properly.

The structural causes of election violence may also be located in deep ethnic or sub-ethnic differences particularly in communities with a history of intra or inter-community resentment and conflict over either political representation or the use of resources such as land. These conflicts are then reactivated or amplified during elections, and as Koko (2009, 68) rightly observes, such issues increase the probability of election violence, particularly where populist politicians vie for office and the media and civil society use these issues as a bait for political mobilization. Koko notes that:

> In such circumstances, elections cease to be merely a matter of dignified political competition, becoming instead a zero sum, game, an opportunity to settle long-held scores by all means available. The situation is aggravated when the electoral system is designed so the winner takes all, turning loss into an electoral defeat but more importantly into collective humiliation and the beginning of an era of marginalization (Koko 2009, 68).

What is instructive to note from the quotation above is that the structural causes of election violence are intertwined with other factors such as the electoral system and identity issues, thus suggesting that the causes of election violence are hardly mutually exclusive. This shows that election violence is a complex phenomenon which requires careful examination.

Apart from structural factors, election violence has also been attributed to the nature of a country's electoral system. Electoral systems that are exclusionary increase the incentives for election violence. Sisk (2008, 11) notes that the electoral system under which an election is held is a very crucial factor in determining the likelihood of election violence because it can give an idea of who will be included or excluded after the election and in many ways shapes the way contestants craft their appeals and the overall context in which elections are held.

Thus countries with winner-take-all electoral or majoritarian systems are more prone to electoral violence because politics becomes a 'zero-sum' game in which losers are permanently excluded and in countries rocked by ethnic divisions the mere prospect of one ethnic group being perpetually excluded becomes an incentive to engage in election violence. Mueller (2011, 102) notes how the highly ethicized and non-programmatic nature of Kenyan politics "pre-disposed both leaders and followers to see politics as a do or die or zero-sum game" in the highly contested 2007 election.

Sisk (2008) notes that when the stakes are too high in an election it creates opportunities for politicians to engage in corruption as they strive to win by any means possible. In addition, high expectations by political contestants can lead to election violence because they may imagine what they stand to lose or the perils and risks of losing a contest.

Uncertainty about the outcome of an electoral contest may mean that an election becomes a question of life and death. Further, in conditions of high scarcity and underdevelopment where political positions are viewed as a means of livelihood rather than an opportunity to serve the public the incentive to engage in election violence becomes much higher because it may mean returning to a life of joblessness and penury.

In societies characterized by networks of patronage certain electoral outcomes are likely to generate election violence more than others. Sisk (2008, 10) notes that when political parties are quite certain that they are going to lose an electoral contest or when they know that they will be permanently excluded from political power the incentive for election violence becomes higher. Thus the politics of patronage in countries like Kenya (Mueller, 2011) and Zimbabwe (Alexander and McGregor 2013) has been cited as one of the root causes of election violence.

Apart from the competitiveness of electoral contests, election violence has also been caused by perceptions, real or imagined that the institutions tasked with the responsibility of running elections lack neutrality or integrity. For example, Mueller (2011) argues that the deliberate weakening of state institutions outside of the presidency, including the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) (whose commissioners were appointed by the incumbent president just before the 2007 election and making his former lawyer the Vice-Chairman of the Commission) and the creation of new appointments in the judiciary was perceived to have undermined the integrity and legitimacy of these institutions.

The violence which followed after the elections is partly linked to perceptions of bias by these institutions and as Mueller argues, the disputes and the violence that ensued appear to have been "organized in anticipation of possible loss" (Mueller 2011, 104) and is partly linked to the violence that ensued in the post-election period. Koko (2009, 70) rightly observes that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the weakness of state institutions and election violence in the sense that the weaker state institutions become the less is their ability to deliver credible elections, and violence tends to erode their credibility further.

Apart from the triggers discussed above, other triggers of electoral violence that have been cited in the literature on election violence include the lack of a tolerant political culture, the protection of incumbency, disputes about the delimitation of constituencies, the role of the national security forces in the election process (Koko 2009). Sachikonye (2011) examines the causes, patterns and consequences of political violence in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2008, a significant period which is covered by this study.

Sachikonye sought to explore how political violence impacted on the country's evolving political culture. He makes three pertinent observations that resonate with the findings on discursive constructions of election violence discussed in Chapter Seven. Firstly, he observes that violence has a historical dimension, having its roots in the country's colonial and liberation war and is "embedded in a tradition and practice of violence that began more than half a century ago" (Sachikonye 2011 xvii). Secondly, he points out that political violence was not "random" but "organized" by different institutions and groups within the country. Thirdly, he concludes that political violence was not one-sided but involved many parties and provides evidence to show that, although they carried different proportions of culpability and level of involvement, state institutions, opposition parties and civil society organisations all engaged or participated in political violence; sentiments that are echoed in citizen discourses discussed in Chapter Seven. However, unlike the focus of this thesis, which is press and citizen discourses Sachikonye's study is more of a historical account of the manifestations, causes and institutionalization of political violence. Its focus on political violence within and without the electoral context means that, unlike the present study, its scope is much wider than what is contemplated in this thesis.

However, it is worth noting that there is a general consensus among scholars that the factors discussed above are 'triggers' rather than the primary causes of election violence, although there is no agreement in relation to their level of influence with some scholars accentuating the weakness of state institutions and patronage (see Shilaho 2013; Alexander and McGregor, 2013, Dercon and Gutierrez-Romero 2012; Frazer 2009) the competitiveness of elections (Sisk 2008; Mueller 2011),"the military-security complex" (Masunungure 2009; Makumbe 2009), underlying historical, social, economic and political factors (Bekoe, 2010, Oucho 2010; UNDP 2010), the democratization context linked with military dictatorships and the colonial struggle which bread a culture of political violence (Omotola 2008).

Stefan Dercon and Roxana Gutierrez-Romero who conducted a survey on the Kenyan 2007 post-election violence found out that the majority of the respondents (42%) attributed election violence to "election irregularities and a weak Electoral Commission".

Strauss and Taylor (2009) conclude that weak and corruptible electoral institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa encouraged politicians to compete for access to vital resources such as land, resulting in lawlessness, while the UNDP (2010, 8) states that election violence in Africa is caused by "deep rooted socio-economic and political issues which are brought to the electoral process". Similarly, Bekoe (2010) posits that electoral violence in Africa is a sign of the currency of systematic bottled grievances over resources such as land, employment and ethnic marginalization. This suggests that the salience of these factors is determined by the social, political and economic context in which elections are held. While one set of factors may be salient in one country another set of factors will be dominant in another context. As alluded to above, these triggers are not mutually exclusive, an indication that it may be difficult to clinically disaggregate the causal factors of election violence. This shows that the issue of the causes of election violence is very complex.

The literature is, however, silent on the role of international observers in election violence. This is troubling, particularly against the background of emerging evidence that election monitors sometimes endorse flawed elections in order to protect the interests of their member states or their donors so as to "accommodate their compelling but tangential organizational norms" (Kelley 2009, 766).

Laakso (2002) has examined the politics of international election observation, noting how before the 2002 presidential elections in Zimbabwe some international election observers made certain demands before the elections and threatened to impose sanctions if the Zimbabwean government did not accede to their demands. It would be unreasonable to conclude that the activities of international observers in themselves may cause election violence; however, that bias by election monitors, through endorsement of fraudulent elections (see Kelly 2009) or conspiracy of silence on transgressions has an effect on election violence.

It is also instructive to note that with the exception of a few scholars (e.g. Koko 2009) the literature on election violence, (mainly by political science scholars) hardly mentions let alone foregrounds the media as triggers of election violence. This is surprising given that the media has been implicated in African political conflicts such as the Rwanda genocide. Even when the media are mentioned, as in the case of Koko (2009, 75) the actual role played by the media in the violence is fuzzy as it is simply stated as "negative" and nothing beyond that. Further, the relationship between the media and the culture of political violence in socially, politically and economically fragile societies remains unexplored and the potential implications of such discursive practices on election violence remains a matter of conjecture.

2.4. Mediation of Political Violence

> *It must be admitted, of course, that violence makes good copy. A good machine gun attack on a bank makes exciting reading, and in a free press journalists report and editors will always print what they believe to be exciting for their readers* (Chalfont et al 1980, 80).

The above quotation is a succinct summation of how violence of any nature lends itself to the news-making process-one of the key recurring themes in the literature discussed in this section. There is an outpouring of literature examining the mediation of political violence in its broad sense i.e. wars, terrorism, protests, demonstrations etc., (Cissel 2012; Thussu 2009; Papacharissi and Oliveira 2008; Nossek, Sreberny, and Sonwalkar 2007; Hobart 2007; McCallum 2007; Wolfsfed, 1993; Schlesinger 1991; Chalfont et al. 1980; Clutterbuck 1981).

This strand of literature has some relevance to the present study in so far as it demonstrates the dynamics and logics attendant to the mass mediation of election violence, although, unlike the present study its focus is not on election violence *per se*, but political violence in its broader sense, including demonstrations, wars, and terrorism, to mention only a few. A further distinction on this strand of literature can be made on account of the specific focus of mediation and three categories emerge.

The literature which focuses on 'media coverage' (Chalfont et al 1980; Wolfsfeld 1993; Jones 2005; McCallum 2007; Hobart 2007; Thussu 2009; Cissel 2012; 'media frames' (Boyd 2000; Volcic 2007; Robinson 2008; Autesserre 2009) and 'discourse' (Ryan 2004; Van Gorp 2005; Christie 2006; Papacharissi and Oliveira 2008). However, the unifying factor in this literature is that all studies focus on the competing interpretations of political violence and the divergent objectives of different actors in the communication of political violence, thus underscoring the fact that political violence is a site for ideological contestation.

Literature on the mediation of political violence mainly focuses on how the media reported on different incidents of political violence, ranging from terrorism, war, demonstrations, protests and crises of different kinds. Two key texts in this category are Phillip Schlesinger's *Media, State and Nation: Political Violence and Collective Identities* (1981) and an edited volume by Hillel Nossek, Annabelle Sreberny and Prasun Son Walker, *Media and Political Violence* (2007).

Using British case studies of political violence involving industrial disputes, mass demonstrations and terrorist incidents, Schlesinger (1981) examines the theoretical debates around the interpretation of political violence, its relationship with the state and the media. He tackles enduring themes around the media and political violence nexus and rejects the assumption that the media should be on the side of the state when reporting political violence. In relation to industrial disputes Schlesinger argues that the media gave salience to the views of the public which dislikes strikes, noting that any bias against strikers would have invoked a sense of injustice.

Schlesinger views the mediation of political violence as characterized by competing interpretations of events by different actors that seek to either legitimise or de-legitimise political violence. Thus political violence is viewed as a "contested category in political discourse" (Schlesinger 1981, 2) with one school of thought viewing the state and media as being collaborative in covering political violence while another school views the media as an independent fourth estate and not an appendage of the state. However, Schlesinger argues that this dichotomy is simplistic as the reality is more complex and argues that the scope of media reporting of political violence is conditioned "by the contradictory communicative strategies of the state and its armed enemies" (Schlesinger 1981, 4). Thus Schlesinger dismisses arguments by some scholars who take a moralistic stance and accuse the media of being sympathetic, if not supportive of perpetrators of political violence, adding that the success of terrorism depends on the amount of publicity given by the media (Chalfont 1980).

Chalfont (1980) contends that the media have been obliging tools of terrorist organizations through a combination of subtle manipulation, subtle collusion, unwitting collaboration, rationalization, explaining away terrorism and obsession with the seductive news worthiness of political violence resulting in terrorist organizations and the acolytes getting undeserved publicity in the media. Chalfont dismisses any attempts to sanitize terrorist organizations by comparing them with democratically elected governments who have a legitimate monopoly of violence, describing such attempts as 'bogus intellectual objectivity' and 'fallacious moral symmetry' (Chalfont 1980, 81). Chalfont posit that:

> The first point to be grasped is that terrorism would be impotent without publicity. It depends for its effect upon dramatic impact in order to compel and hold public attention. Terrorists have occasionally shown great sophistication in manipulating the media. Some of the results of all this have been striking and disturbing. The FLN in Algeria discovered that if you killed ten Frenchmen in the desert, no one noticed; but kill one in the casbah and it would be front page news the next day in every Paris newspaper (Chalfont 1980, 79).

This statement echoes Papacharissi and Oliveira's observation that terrorism has the propensity to attract the sympathy of the news media because it has elements of drama that media savvy terrorists exploit the media to legitimize their cause (Papacharissi and Oliveira 2008).

Thussu (2009, 17) notes how the Indian government, after the Mumbai terrorist bombings in November 2010 became a "non-stop, news generated soap opera that you could plug into whenever you wished…A platform for hyperventilating for outraged citizens, mostly of a class pursued by advertisers. A pillorying point for politicians. And a site for war mongering, no less" (Thussu 2009, 15) paving way for the Indian government to craft new measures regulating the Cable News sector. One of the regulations was that, should such events occur in the future there should be "delayed carriage of live feed" (Thussu 2009, 18) in order to curb the "Bollywoodization" of terrorism (Thussu 2009, 18).

These descriptions invoke debates about the normative role of the media in political violence, ethical issues like objectivity, impartiality and balance and policy issues like press freedom and media regulation.

Thus, scholars who do not subscribe to the objectivist school blame the media's adversarial relationship with governments as an abdication of the public interest (Chalfont 2007, Thussu 2009). Schlesinger disagrees with this view when he says that:

> …we should not see broadcasting either as a simple instrument of the state or as the terrorist's friend; nor should we buy the argument that it is a fearless part of the mythic Fourth Estate. The reality is actually more complex, and …the scope for reporting at any given time is in many respects conditioned by the contradictory communicative strategies of the state and its armed enemies.

The theoretical debates raised by Schlesinger (1981) and other scholars are taken up and elaborated through practical case studies in an edited volume by Nossek, Sreberny and Sonwalkar (2007). The volume examines various theoretical perspectives for understanding the nexus between the mass media and political violence in historical and contemporary case studies in different parts of the world.

It examines mass mediation of different types of political violence such as the Hiroshima bombing (Allan 2007) the Bosnian war (La Porte 2007; Bloch-Elkon and Lehman- Wilzig 2007) the September 11 bombings and the war in Iraq (Berkowitz 2007), terrorist attacks in Indonesia (Hobart 2007), the Bali Bombings in Indonesia (2007), the war on terror (Lewis 2007 and other recent political conflict around the globe.

The running thread in these studies is how the element of conflict lends political violence to newsworthiness and how media from different ideological standpoints may deploy different discursive practices on the same event thereby generating competing versions of reality. For instance, Hobart (2007) compares and contrasts Indonesian and British media coverage of the September 11, 2001 bombing of the twin towers in the United States of America and the Bali bombings in Indonesia.

On the one hand, the Indonesian media reported the September 11 as a low key event, avoided naming the perpetrators (a discursive strategy known as 'exnomination', meaning avoiding naming something) and tried to balance their own perspectives with their own hegemonic Euro-American narratives. On the other hand, the British media named the alleged perpetrators of the Bali bombing (nomination) and engaged in mythologizing, silencing and stereotypical assumptions that made the causes, perpetrators and victims of the violence appear common cause.

Hobart argues that the British media's representation of the Bali bombings reflected a 'distinctly Christian dystopia' which was at odds with the Hindu values of the Indonesian society, thereby preventing a critical inquiry on the manifestations of political violence and the act of representing became a form of political violence against the Indonesian society itself (Hobart, 2007, 11).

The difference in the representation of the same event by the Indonesian and the British reflects the contention between two conflicting journalistic cultures (Hantzc et al, 2011) and news production values.

Schlesinger (1991) who views violence as essentially "contested" term in political discourse and advises that terms such as "terrorism" should be "understood within the context of competing propaganda strategies by the state and its enemies" (Schlesinger 1991, vii).

The implications are that violence becomes a "strategically, consciously employed resource" (Riches cited in Schlesinger 1991, 1) and its mediation must be viewed as a struggle over meaning the mediation of political violence should be viewed as a struggle over meaning rather than in moralistic terms. Hence, political violence is subject to various and sometimes competing interpretations by the media through their rhetorical, semantic and framing activities. Thus, Cissel (2012) who employed content analysis and the framing theory to investigate mainstream and alternative media coverage of the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations in the United States of America in 2011 found out that alternative and mainstream media used different frames to represent the demonstrators. Further, the differences in framing were not just attributable to media ownership, but to a host of relationships and networks cemented by friendships, investments, advertising and other commercial relationships and the motives which informed of the divergent political agendas of the mainstream and alternative media. This shows that the media are deeply implicated in political violence.

However, what role they should play in political violence and how they should execute that role remains debatable and the flurry of studies discussed above are inconclusive. It is, however; instructive to note that the underlying assumptions informing the literature on the relationship between the media and political violence in the broad sense are the uniqueness of political violence and the accompanying dramatic and conflictual elements that make it newsworthy. Such assumptions are premised on the basis that most current studies focus only on serious, large scale conflicts such as those associated with terrorism, war, the holding of hostages and other such similarly dramatic crises or what Thussu refers to as "Bollywoodisation" (Thussu 2009).

Wolfsfeld (1993) examined the role of the news media in the *intifada* and the Gulf Wars using what he describes as the "transactional model" to explain the role of the news media in lopsided conflicts, demonstrating how media get implicated in situations characterized by power symmetries (Wolfsfeld 1993). He discusses the role of the news media in "unequal political conflicts" (public confrontations pitting a party that controls a significant amount of coercive resources, such as the state or government, against at least one other antagonist with comparatively less resources.

Wolfsfeld posits that in unequal conflicts the weaker side uses the media to gain the sympathy of third parties in order to "create a more balanced power" (Wolfsfeld, 1993, 1). The ability of the antagonist to bring third parties to its side depends on the extent to which the media appropriate the frames of the antagonist and propagate them within a wider constituency. He contends that the inclusion or subtraction of players in a conflict can alter power relations in a conflict and that weaker parties have more to gain by expanding the scope of the conflict and the media play an important role in this process. The more powerful party in a conflict also deploys the media to fit its strategic interests and possibly neutralize the media by keeping the conflict away from the public agenda. The party also ensures that the official voice drowns all other voices until the voice of the weaker party is completely obliterated (Wolfsfeld 1993).

While this model could be helpful in explaining how the media are instrumentalised in political conflicts and how media framing may be geared to balance the power equation by appealing to external partners/players, it does not clearly explain what happens in political contexts where the media are polarized along political lines and each media camp is a pliant instrument for political mobiliziation.

The model also falls short in terms of which media (international or national) gets conscripted in the conflict to balance the power relations, since in some situations the bulk of the media might be in the hands of the more powerful party (the state or government) as is the case in Zimbabwe. In electoral contests, it is not clear how bringing in third parties to the conflict affects relations between the protagonists.

Although the specific focus of this thesis is election violence, a special type of violence subsumed by political violence (Sisk 2008) this study takes the stance that in so far as election violence relates to the electoral context, important theoretical insights can be drawn from the mediation of other types of political violence, particularly on how the media are implicated in power struggles. When that happens, the different media structure mutually antagonistic narratives about incidences of political violence in different ways. It is, however, important to keep in mind the uniqueness of election violence, particularly in so far as it takes place in the context of electoral campaigns.

2.5 Media and Election Violence

As mentioned above, there is paucity of literature which focuses on election violence as a sub-set of political violence. There is even fewer literature that focuses on press and citizen discourses of election violence (if any). Election violence is a special type of political violence and differs from other types of political violence in the sense that its motive is to change the outcome of an election.

In this framework Reif (2011, 5-6) views election violence as "any spontaneous or organized actions by candidates, party supporters, election supporters, election authorities, voters, or other political actors that employ physical harm, intimidation, blackmail, verbal abuse, violent demonstrations, psychological manipulation, or other forms of coercion (or threat thereof) aimed at disrupting, determining, hastening, delaying, reversing, otherwise influencing an election and its outcome".

Meadow conceives election violence as "acts that are used to harm, intimidate, exploit, disrupt, determine, hasten, delay or reverse electoral process or outcomes and acts that occur between the registration of a voter and the inauguration of a political regime" (Meadow 2009, 234). Sisk (2008, 5) sees election violence as "…Acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm to affect an electoral process or that arises in the context of an electoral competition. Straus and Scott (2007, 8) assert that electoral violence is the "physical violence and coercive intimidation directly tied to an impending electoral contest or to an announced electoral result."

These definitions are wide and encompass a lot of elements, meaning that like the broad term "political violence", election violence also suffers from "conceptual devaluation or semantic entropy" (Schlesinger 1991, 5). Meadow's definition is more suited to the objectives of this thesis and its sampling procedure in so far as it covers violence perpetrated during a full election cycle; namely, the pre-election period, during voting and the post-election period (see Chapter Three). Election violence, in this thesis includes any violent acts or threats of violence reported in the media six weeks before and two weeks after an election.

Although there is a significant amount of literature focusing on African elections (Temin and Smith, 2002; Waldahl 2004; Adriantosa et al, 2005; Waldahl 2005; Uzodike and Whetho, 2006; Lindberg 2006; Teshome, 2008; Chuma, 2008; Selinyane 2008; Ogola, 2009 Frere 2011a; Frere 2011b) none of these really focus on election violence *per se* (although Waldahl (2004) briefly discusses 'political violence' in the context of an election that was not his major focus, while Frere (2011a) and (2011b) focuses on the role of the media in post-conflict elections. It suffices to acknowledge the existence of this literature but will not be subjected to any further scrutiny since it does not have a direct link with this thesis.

The snippets of literature by some Non-Governmental Organisations such as the Media Monitoring Project (see MMPZ 2000a; 2000b; 2001; 2002; 2006; 2009; 2011) is also acknowledged but because it does not exclusively focus on mediated election violence it will not be discussed further than this acknowledgement. At both the global and continental level literature on election violence and the media is scant.

One is inclined to agree with Meadow (2009) who attributes the lack of attention to election violence to the fact that, unlike other types of political violence election violence is "time concentrated" and has comparatively fewer death tallies than wars and rebellions which take place over a long period of time resulting in huge death tolls (Meadow 2009, 232). Meadow (2009) notes that with the exception of Kenya's 2007 post-election violence where more than 1000 people died, 3500 injured and 350, 000 displaced, (and in Ivory Coast where 3000 people died in the 2010/2011 post-election violence) election violence has far more fewer deaths and casualties.

As a result, election violence and the media as a subject has not been given adequate academic scrutiny. This demonstrates that although other types of political violence have received considerable academic attention, election violence, particularly its nexus with the media and citizens has remained in the backburner of the academic enterprise. There are snippets of literature on election violence and the media worth considering, although this literature does not directly address the concerns of this thesis.

One theoretical expose on the role of the media in election violence deserves some attention in this regard. This is an article by Robert G Meadow who develops a general typology of election violence based on whether it is proactive or reactive (Meadow 2009, 234).

Meadow defines proactive election violence as entailing; turnout suppression, boycott enforcement, justice seeking, retaliatory and outcome grieving. Meadow notes that the structure of media organisations and the nature of elections make it rather difficult to gauge the actual role of the media in election violence (Meadow 2009). This is particularly the case if the nature of the violence is covert. Unlike other types of political violence, election violence is very difficult to detect because elections take place at many and different venues and yet the media, due to resource constraints cannot be everywhere to detect election violence all the time.

Using examples from the United States of America, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Iran and Sri Lanka, India and Macedonia, Meadow argues that the media play two crucial roles in election violence.

Firstly, they can legitimize or delegitimize elections by providing external evidence thereof, and through its interpretative frames the press can create the impression that an election was free and fair or was rigged through coercive acts.

Secondly, the media are able to alert people about the risks and dangers of partaking in elections by showing people bearing the brunt of electoral violence, thereby invoking the 'burglar alarm' role of the press whereby, the press acts as a sentry to alert citizens about impending danger or crisis (McQuail 2013, 112).

Meadow notes that, courtesy of the new technological enhancements occasioned by the digital media, images of election violence can now be disseminated to a global audience, thereby creating an opportunity for more people to witness election violence. However, whether the enhanced ability to see violence can help explain its underlying causes remains unclear (Meadow 2009, 239). Meadow contends that the "presentation of these images does nothing to address the path to resolution of the conflicts that underlie the violence. Despite plenty of literature on election violence, there is limited empirical and comparative evidence of the causes and trajectories of election violence (Meadow 2009, 239).

This conclusion leads him to raise close a dozen questions about election violence, of which question number 5, 6, 8 and 9 are worth reiterating on account of their resonance with some of the literature reviewed in this chapter and the central concerns of this thesis and are stated thus:

(5)Whether election violence is greater when there are existing cleavages within society not rooted in ideology, but in ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic, economic, or geographic differences;

(6) Whether election violence is greater at political transition points when the stakes are highest, such as the first democratic election, the end of dictatorship, upon independence, and so forth;

(8)With respect to the media, what are the dominant images of election violence?

(9) What are the narratives used to portray election violence? (Meadow 2009, 239-240).

These questions are pertinent because they speak to the context in which election violence occurs (whether there are cleavages or not) the time in history in which election violence takes place (transition or consolidation, end of an era) the images selected by the media (selections, silence/suppression/ salience) and discursive constructions (narratives).

It is for these reasons that this thesis sought to background the socio-socio-economic and political context, (characterized by fragility in the context of this), periodization and discursive constructions of election violence. Although there are important insights gleaned from Meadow's article, it does not focus on election violence on any specific political context nor does it directly focus on the press, which is the focus of this thesis. Like most of the studies reviewed in this chapter its media centric approach implies a one-sided political communication process in which other elements such as the audience are not anticipated in the social construction of reality. By focusing on both the press and citizen discourses this thesis departs from this approach.

Two reports on media and election violence by Stremlau and Price (2009) and Stremlau et al (2009) are worth noting. The former is based on a workshop which sought to explore the election experiences of Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Somaliland, Tanzania and Sudan. It came up with an analytical framework for understanding the role of the media in the post-election context. It argues that the media, particularly the new media can play three roles in the post-election context, namely, as a mirror, an amplifier and enabler (Stremlau and Price, 2009).

The ‘mirror’ metaphor connotes that the media should reflect on the state and nation-building processes, providing insights into the levels of national dialogue within communities. ‘As amplifiers’ the media make it easier for people to disseminate messages geared towards mobilizing others to take certain actions. In the case of the Kenyan 2007 post-election violence, the amplifier role was witnessed when new media gadgets such as mobile phones and vernacular radios were used to propagate hate messages.

As ‘enablers’, the media can prioritize nation-building through the celebration of common identities, negotiation of political power as well as acting as outlets for divergent opinions (Stremlu and Price 2009). A point underlined by the report is that the media do not necessarily cause violence, but are among a number of factors that have a bearing on election violence. Stremlu and Price’s (2009), observation that the media play different, if not dynamic roles during elections is plausible. The level of state legitimacy, political polarization, the degree of media partisanship, and to some extent, media commercialization are some of the factors that influence the media’s function during an election. The second report, Stremalau et al., (2009) explores issues of media policy in relation to election violence, using the experiences of Kenya’s 2007 post-election violence to “distill lessons” for an impending election in Somaliland.

The report identifies six factors that the government, journalists and politicians should be aware of namely, the monitoring and regulation of radio, reporting of public opinion polls, reporting of election results, live news coverage of violence, the accelerating effect of new technology and partisan media and public broadcasting (Stremlau 2009, 8).

In addition, the report discusses potential triggers of election violence. Among these are government monopolization of state media and “concerns about the private press exacerbating a tense situation” through the use of “provocative words directed at the government” (Stremlau 2009, 15). A key point underlined in this report is that the Kenyan media did not cause the violence in 2007, but “together with government policies and interventions exacerbated a volatile situation” (Stremlau 2009, 17).

While these reports are valuable for their insights on the functions of the media during electoral violence they are more policy oriented interventions and their findings are not based on empirical research but brainstorming sessions during a workshop. This is however, does not minimise their contribution to the body of literature on media and election violence, which they acknowledge is very little (Stremlau et al 2009).

However, the fact that these reports do not necessarily focus on any particular media type is problematic in that the media is very diverse and cannot possibly play the same role at any one time. It is highly inconceivable that broadcasting media or social media which are visual media and disseminate their messages can play exactly the same role as the press, notwithstanding the impact of media convergence occasioned by new technological developments.

2.6 The Press and Election Violence

There is a miniscule amount of literature that directly addresses the role of the press in election violence in the African context. Almost all of this literature focuses on the role of the press in the Kenyan post- election violence of 2007/2008, while very little scholarly literature exists on the bloodiest electoral conflict on the African continent, the 2010/2011 Ivorian elections. Notable studies on the Kenyan conflict includes Onyepadi and Oyedeji (2011)'s content analytic examination of how the country's main newspapers, the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* covered the post-election violence. Onyepadi and Oyedeji argue that the way in which the two newspapers reported on the post-election crisis in Kenya advanced peace rather than promoting conflict, thereby debunking the "stereotypical characterization of African media as sectarian advocates of mayhem or institutions that hardly play any constructive role during crises (Onyebadi and Oyedeji 2011, 224).

The study observes that during the pre-election period the two newspapers used thematic frames to address the restoration of peace story, thus demonstrating, that even in the context of 'worst case' scenarios such as the Kenyan post-election violence of 2007 the media's role is not wholly negative.

Although the dominant view is that the media in Kenya, particularly the local language radio stations were responsible for fanning violence (Ismail and Dean, 2008, Ogola, 2009) Onyebadi and Oyedeji's study shows that the mainstream press in that country generally played a positive role by fostering peace-building (Onyebadi and Oyedeji 2012), thus debunking the wholesale indictment of the media in the Kenyan 2007 post-election violence.

Although Onyebadi and Oyedeji's study is based on two newspapers with similar ownership the fact that the study deviates from conventional wisdom about the role of the media in electoral conflicts in Africa supplies the impetus for further empirical studies to validate or invalidate previous findings about the role of the press in political conflicts in fragile societies.

In any event, this was a small study which did not cover a full electoral cycle and the analysis is limited to only two newspapers.

Although their analysis brings refreshing findings pertaining to the possible roles of the press in election violence, the content analysis approach used tends to limit analysis to thematic issues, meaning that it does not cater for discourses *per se*. Similarly, Coesmans (2013) studied discursive constructions of Kenya's post 2007 election violence in hard news report from a linguistic-pragmatic approach.

His methodology encompassed 'quantitative content analysis', 'qualitative discourse analysis' and ethnographic fieldwork' comparing the thematic analysis of news reports from local newspapers (*Daily Nation* and *The Standard*) and foreign newspapers (*The Independent* (UK), *The Times*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*). He concluded that news representation in British and American newspapers accentuated ethnicity while that of the national newspapers tended to politicize the post-election violence.

He argues that the difference in language use is attributed to "contextual (political, social and pragmatic) factors" (Coesmans 2013, 179). Thus,

> The Kenyan newspapers contained few references to ethnicity because of policy, political context and because the news workers believed they would inflame tensions in the assumption that they had to protect their multi-ethnic readership and restore harmony in the country. Foreign correspondents made frequent use of ethnic language, because they deemed it relevant for their audiences abroad and acknowledged the explanatory force of such terms both from a journalistic and reader perspective, although they often only saw what was happening at the surface (Coesemans 2013, 197).

Significantly the tension between the local and foreign invokes Schlesinger (1991)'s argument that violence is an ideological interpretation and Huntington's notion of the "clash of civilizations" discussed above. This demonstrates the complexity of the mediation of election violence.

Although these studies have illuminating insights on the press and election violence they did not examine citizen discourses, meaning that they do limit understanding of the political communication process (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). Incorporating the audience (citizens) opens up pathways for understanding election violence as a site for struggle over meaning.

It is one way of taking up the challenge by Esser and Pfetch (2004) who rightly observe that because the media effects debate is nearing a dead end there is need to turn attention to how audiences engage with political messages in order to broaden understanding of the political communication process.

This thesis seeks to contribute to this research agenda by shifting attention from the efficacy of journalistic messaging to meaning production (Louw 2001, 2005), bearing in mind that the media are ideological agencies which co-construct meaning with "multiple players embedded in ever shifting contextual arrangements within which there are simultaneous pressures for 'opening' and 'closing' reading (and coding) possibilities" (Louw 2001, 208).

The acknowledgement that meanings are co-constructed in the political communication process resonates with this thesis's ambition to engage press and citizen discourses in a dialogue. Further, a discursive analysis of how these key elements of the political communication process interact during electoral episodes thereby opening up open debates on the press-election violence nexus to a more inquisitive exploration of African elections as discursive formations, and representation of election violence as an alternative way of 'seeing' (Schlesinger 1991).

Having outlined these theoretical debates it is imperative to return to the research questions driving this thesis: How did the press and citizens in Zimbabwe construct election violence during Zimbabwe's Presidential and Parliamentary elections during 2000 and 2013? What meanings do the press and citizens generate about electoral violence? Why do they construct such meanings? How do press discourses on election violence differ from citizen discourses? What are the implications of these discursive constructions to democracy? In order to address these questions a discursive analytic approach was adopted in order to glean insights on the way in which the press and citizens interface during electoral violence. The next section discusses the theoretical framework which underpins this thesis.

2.7 Theorizing Media Representation of Reality: Mediation, Discourse and Power

A key assumption made in this thesis is that media texts are not reality but versions of reality which is subject to a variety of interpretations. In order to theoretically contextualize questions about press and citizen discourses on election violence this section focuses on the various perspectives on how the media shape and construct reality through representation. One key concept that resonates with the constructionist approach outlined in this thesis (see Chapter Three) also central to this debate is mediation, a term which suggests that the media become more influential in the production and circulation of knowledge in contemporary society. McQuail (1994, 64) notes that "the information, images and ideas made available by the media may, for most people be the main source of awareness of a shared past (history) and present social location", and that the media are a store of social memories and a map of where and who we are ("identity").

There is no consensus regarding the precise meaning of mediation and descriptions of the term range from connotations about its passive role, through a neutral role to an active role. McQuail (1994, 65) observes that "mediation can mean different things ranging from neutrality to informing, through negotiation, to attempts at manipulation and control".

An array of terms connoting the different versions of the mediation process such as "mirror", "window", "signpost", "filter", "screen", "barrier", and "forum" (McQuail, 1994:65) demonstrate the ambivalence of mediation as a process. Silverstone alludes to this ambivalence when he defines mediation as "the fundamentally, but evenly, dialectical process in which institutionalized media of communication (the press, broadcast radio and television and increasingly the world wide web) are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life" (Silverstone, 2002:3).

Debate on mediation is polarized between positive and negative accounts of the mediation role of the media (Thompson, 1995; Silverstone, 2002, Couldry, 2006, Silverstone, 2006; Chouriaraki, 2011). Positive formulations of mediation position the media as innocently relaying "second-hand versions of events and conditions which we cannot directly observe for ourselves"(McQuail, 1994,65).Thus conceived, mediation harks back on technological determinism, whereby the media close the distance between *us* and *them,* thereby enhancing understanding between geographically distanced people (Chouliaraki, 2006: Silverstone, 2002; Chouliaraki and Orgad, 2011).

The positive articulations of mediation overlook the fact that media texts are products of specific historical, socio-political and economic contexts and as such they shape and are shaped by those particular contexts. This evokes the dialectical nature of mediation and as Couldry (2006,3) asserts "media work, and must work, not by transmitting discrete textual units for discrete moments of reception, but through a process of environmental transformation which in turn transforms the conditions under which any future media can be produced and understood". McQuail (1994, 229) asserts that media production decisions are shaped by a combination of economic, technological and media cultural logics which impacts on the media products.

The view that technology 'annihilates' distance by bringing the spectator closer to the represented, what Giddens refers to as the "sequestration of experience" (cited in Silverstone 2002,14) should be taken with some skepticism because it overlooks inherent differences between the spectator and the represented. The implication for this is that mediation can increase rather than breach the gap between the spectator and the 'Other' who is represented in the media text. Silverstone succinctly illustrates that the illusion of closeness is implied in this conception of mediation concept thus:

> The illusion of connection is grounded in the refusal of otherness. It is based on the private masquerading as the public, the separate masquerading as the shared, the different masquerading as the same, the distant masquerading as the close at hand, the unequal masquerading as the equal (Silverstone 2002, 10).

This statement suggests that mediation is a contradictory process which brings possibilities of bridging the distance between the spectator and the represented while at the same time undermining possibilities of sameness, shared values and understanding between the communicator and the represented. It is these contradictory tendencies that have contributed to the fuzziness of mediation, a point that will be revisited in subsequent sections.

Unlike the positive view which celebrates technology's ability to connect geographically disconnected people the pessimistic view of mediation mainly foregrounds the ideological and sinister "efforts of other actors and institutions in society to contact us for their own purposes or our own supposed good" (McQuail, 1994:65).

Conceived this way, mediation bears the imprints of agenda-setting (Cohen 1963; Mcombs and Shaw 1972, Severin and Tankard 1992) and framing (Entman 1993; Parenti 1993; Melkote 2009; D'Angelo 2002) which has been broadly understood as "principles of organization which govern events" (Goffman 1974, 10) or "principles of selection, emphasis and presentation" (Gitlin 1980, 6). Like framing, mediation connotes a process whereby the media meaningfully "structure the social world" (Reese 2010, 17).

The implications for this are that, mediation cannot be viewed simply as an innocent reflection of reality as most journalists seem to imply (Schudson 1989, 263) but rather, a conscious process that entails, sifting, selecting, organizing, giving interpretative frameworks for understanding reality, what Herman and Chomsky refer to as 'manufacturing of consent'

(Herman and Chomsky 1988). In the same vein, Thompson (1995, 17) sees the media as invested with symbolic power that enables them to "intervene in the course of events, to influence the actions of others, and indeed, to create events by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms". To the extent that mediated communication aims to define one reality as opposed to another through inclusion and exclusion (Silverstone 2005, 192) mediation can be viewed as essentially a political process.

The argument advanced in this thesis is that, rather than enhancing understanding of the production and reception of meaning in media texts, the polarized perspectives of mediation obfuscate what is otherwise a dynamic process. Couldry succinctly illustrates this dynamism when he states that "the wider space of symbolic action" characterized by "*flows of production, flows of circulation, flows of interpretation, and flows of recirculation where interpretations flow back into production or flow outwards into general social and cultural life*" (2006,4) (emphasis original). Even this critical view of mediation falls short in accounting for the unequal power dynamics embedded in the process of mediation in the sense that it implies that the flows are seamless, and unaided, if not equal. Viewing mediation through a power dynamics lens enables one to visualize how meaning is negotiated between the communicator, the reader and the represented. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that power is not evenly distributed between the journalist, the audience and the represented.

In the specific case of this thesis the questions that arise are: Are journalistic discourses more privileged than citizen discourses in terms of meaning construction; and to what degree do readers (citizens) influence meaning at the level of production? To what extent are journalistic interpretations reflected in ordinary citizens' discursive constructions of election violence? To what extent do citizen or 'popular discourses' on election violence flow back into the domain of production? In order to shed light on these questions it is worthy turning to the multiple dimensions of mediation in order to have a broader understanding of how meaning is constructed through speech and text.

2.7.1 Mediation as Sense Making

Whether one is looking at mediation from an optimistic or pessimistic perspective, that the media define and shape reality is incontrovertible. As such, mediation is a meaning inscription or a transformative process through which the meaningfulness of things is decided (Silverstone, 2002, 2). Events owe their meaningfulness and value to mediation because all communication involves mediation of some sort. Silverstone alludes to this point when he argues that everyday life would be meaningless without communication (Silverstone, 2002, 2). Mediation is crucial in the production of meaning in the sense that it provides the framework and symbolic resources for understanding complex events.

Since mediation involves three elements, namely, the communicator, the audience and the represented it is crucial not only to understand the mechanics of meaning production, but also how and where meanings are produced. Meaning production is hardly the sole privilege of the mass media, but also a terrain of the audiences, although, as Silverstone rightly observes, the power to interrogate the dominant meanings is not evenly distributed across societies (2002, 3). In his encoding-decoding model, Stuart Hall proposes a four phase model in which the communication process is produced and sustained through articulations of what he terms "distinctive moments"(Hall 1993, 508). These pre-determinate moments of meaning production represent four related, but not identical sites in which meanings are generated through framing techniques (Hall 1980), namely the production, circulation/distribution, use and reproduction (During 1993).

Hall argues that each of these four stages of meaning production has its own limits and possibilities and the production of a message impacts on its reception, although this does not take place in a manner that is transparent. There is a way in which the encoding of messages anticipates the reception of the particular message in that messages are packaged with certain audiences implying that media consumption is in a way also a process of content production, although it might not be predominant.

Hall gives the example of television discourse whereby its discursive aspects are framed by meanings, ideas, knowledge, definitions and assumptions about the audience (Hall 1980).

Louw (2001, 206) concurs noting that the receiver of a message is as much part of the encoding of the message. This shows that mediation is a reciprocal process and meanings are not predetermined by the communicator, but collectively produced through a mutual exchange process. However, the precise way in which this exchange of meaning takes place remains a matter of conjecture. In spite of the acknowledgement by the minimal effects paradigm research, that media audiences are active they are still complicit and collusive (Silverstone 2002, 18) to a one way communication in the sense that the media define, determine and set the rules of engagement. As argued below, the media regulate and set limits on what can be discussed, how it can be discussed and why it should be discussed. Although readers have the leverage to choose what they read and the meanings they make from media texts (an indication that they are active) the parameters and terms with which they engage with these texts are prescribed by the logic of the medium. Silverstone argues that:

> …the weaknesses of our media, which are both structural and circumstantial, do not just impinge on everyday life, imposed on our daily values and practices as if by men or women from Mars. They emerge and are accepted as components of a shared culture. Without challenge, without interrogation, and above all without our willingness to take responsibility for them, they both fail us, and crucially, we them. The notion of the active audience (Silverstone, 1994) is limited in so far as it does not move beyond the immediate experience of the individual, and insofar as it does not move beyond the reception of the content…Without such informed interrogation audiences become complicit with the media's representational strategies (Silverstone 2002, 18-19).

Silverstone's argument that audiences are complicit and collude with the media in the representation of events and the 'other' is plausible, but the nature of this complicity and collusion depends on the context in which the mediation takes place and the object of representation. In examining mediation at the reception level, this thesis seeks to broaden understanding on how ideologically opposed press mobilize resources to generate regimes of meaning that enforce different kinds of complicity and collusion among their audiences, and in turn how the ideological preferences of the audience dictate the meaning construction at the production level.

Complicity and collusion in meaning-production between producers and their audience are contingent upon the objects of representation, memory, experience and the conditions in which the representation takes place.

Focusing attention on mediation as a strategy for the production of regimes of truth enables one to broaden questions about how media texts, particularly the news genre, construct, reconstruct and deconstruct reality. Chouliaraki's 'analytics of mediation' (2006, 156) is a sound framework for interrogating how media texts produce meaning through the integration of 'multi-modality' with a critical analysis of discourse. Specifically, the analytics of mediation focuses on how various genres across media make sense of the world through an examination of the "bounded field of possible meaning relations that obey a certain regularity in the ways in which they combine and circulate and as a consequence, in the forms of knowledge and identity they constitute in the medium where they appear" (Chouliraki 2006, 157-158). In the specific context of Chouriaraki's study of television mediation of suffering, she speaks of 'regimes of pity' referring to the multiple semiotic practices that construct suffering as 'a meaningful spectacle with its own proposals of relating to the spectator" (Chouliraki 2006, 158).

Underlying the notion of 'regime of meaning' and by extension 'regime of pity' are not only assumptions about meaning being a construction, but also its contingency of space and time, thus making meaning production a continuous process, what Chouliaraki (2006, 159) calls 'unfinished businesses'. The true value of the analytics of mediation is that it focuses attention on how meaning is constructed through systematic patterns of co-appearance and combinations that organize reality so that news becomes meaningful to the reader or viewer. One element of news responsible for the construction of regimes of meaning which is relevant to this thesis is the mode of representation, which refers to the locations from which the news story is told and the medium used to tell the story (Chouliaraki 2006, 160).

In this thesis, modes of representation include the reporter who writes the story, the form of narration used, the sources used (whether anonymous or named, whether institutional or non-institutional, lay or expert, whether moral witnesses or participants).

The mode of news presentation is critical in so far as it determines how the audiences evaluate the events being represented and the actions they are likely to take as a result of the news.

Different types of narratives may yield distinct "regimes of truth" depending on the perceptions of realism. News is an open-ended genre with the capacity to generate multiple (and sometimes conflicting meanings) about an issue. To that extent election violence is bound to generate different meanings with different people depending on their ideological point of view and experiences. In order to enhance the believability of their stories and to secure the complicity and collusion of their readers in the desired regimes of meaning, news employs a coterie of classificatory techniques such as exclusion, inclusion, foregrounding, backgrounding, justification and legitimating devices in order to separate victims from perpetrators of violence. Chouliaraki (2006, 162) identifies three narrative functions of the news that are responsible for this classificatory work namely; descriptions (hard facts about what we see) narrations or story-telling proper (chronological report) and expositions (verbal narratives that incorporates points of view within the news).

As a sense-making enterprise mediation reflects power inequalities embedded within the communication process as well as the broader society. Focusing on media texts as discursive constructs endowed with their own internal logic and specific approaches to truth claims enables one to understand how this power is unevenly distributed and exercised. The next section turns to a discussion on power and discourse. It argues that media texts as discursive constructs produce particular 'regimes of truths' that are open to contestation.

2.7.2 Discourse, Power and Knowledge: A Foucauldian Perspective

The dominant perspective of mediation connotes a process that entails the passive construction of reality or simply a situation whereby the media closes the distance between 'us' and 'them' or as Silverstone posits, "the movement of meaning from one text to another, from one discourse to another, from one event to another" (Silverstone 1999, 13).

Many of the metaphors of mediation discussed above as much accentuate this view. For instance, the 'mirror' metaphor implies that "there is nothing much that can be done about the reflections in a mirror" (Potter, 1996, 98) as if to suggest that reality is pre-ordained and not other people's versions of the world, what Foucault refers to as "regimes of truth" (Foucault 1972, 201).

One key concept that spotlights meaning production as embedded in power relations is discourse. The concept discourse is very broad and multi-dimensional (Pitsoe and Letseka 2013, 24) as a result scholars hardly agree on a precise definition, with some giving catch-all definitions of the term, while others define it narrowly (Hobbs, 2008). Many scholars are however in agreement that the term discourse owes its origins to the works of French scholar and post-structuralist, Michael Foucault (Fairclough, 1989; Fairclough, 1995; Potter, 1996; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Hobbs 2008; Whisnat 2012). Foucault defines discourse as:

> '…a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment…Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But…since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do- our conduct- all practices have a discursive aspect (Foucault, cited in Hall 1992, 291).

This definition is broad enough to encompass language, social practices and ways of thinking about particular subjects. Chouliraki and Fairclough subscribe to Foucault's definition of discourse but extend it to include the "economic, social and cultural changes of late modernity" as discourses as well (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999 4). Conceived this way discourse encompasses both material and extra-discursive facets of social reality such as money, power, relations, material practices, institutions beliefs, values and modes of social relations (Chouliraki and Fairclough, 1999, 6). Such a definition is elastic enough to incorporate all the elements of the Foucauldian discursive approach which underpins this study.

Whisnat (2012 4-5) defines discourse as the "very specific patterns of language that tell us something about the person speaking the language, the culture that the person is part of, the network of social institutions that the person is caught up in, and even frequently the most basic assumptions that the person holds".

This definition situates discourse in relations of power but is limited in that it suggests that discourses are trapped in language ignoring the fact that language is a social practice.

Fairclough (1989, 20) locates discourse in different sites, i.e. conversational, textual, as well as in production, reception and interpretation and shares many aspects of Foucault's definition. He conceives discourse as "the whole process of social interaction…" in addition to the text, the process of production and interpretation for which the text is a resource (Fairclough 1989, 20). Viewing discourse as social practice implies that when analysing discourse it is imperative to pay attention to the social conditions in which discourses are produced, consumed and interpreted because discourse is constitutive, meaning it is shaped and shapes the conditions in which it is produced. Seeing discourse as a social practice means that we should be committed to scrutinizing not just the process of production and interpretation, but also the relationship between texts, processes and their immediate and remote conditions of institutional and social structures (Fairclough 1989, 20). This shows that discourse is embedded in relations of power. Viewing discourse this way is useful in the sense that it does not limit discourse to language but incorporates ways of talking, thinking, morality, meaning and about who can speak and when. In other words discourse is intricately interwoven with power and knowledge.

In the specific context of this thesis concerns about power emanate from the fact that discourse, particularly media discourses, shape the work of journalists through framing practices that affect perceptions of (Hobbs, 2008). The Foucauldian definition is preferred in this thesis because it foregrounds meaning production as particular "regimes of truth" (Foucault 1972; Hobbs 2008, 13) distributed through text and talk and incorporates Fairclough's idea of discourse as a social practice (Fairclough, 1989, Potter, 1996).

Discourse is thus conceived as representations or versions of reality about the world produced through text and talk and social practice in a context of unequal power relationships. Such a conception of discourse suggests that meanings are not intrinsic but are ascribed by people and enables one to address critical questions about how the press and citizens make claims to truth through symbolic structuring of the meaning of events such as electoral violence.

An understanding of the discursive production of power and dominance starts with asking questions like, who has access to the press to talk about election violence; what are they saying about election violence; the descriptions they use when talking about election violence; when and in what context do they speak about election violence? Knowing who has access to discourse is important because it is the first step towards understanding the distribution of power.

Van Dijk (1996, 86) argues that the more access one has to discourse the more social power they wield. Access to discourse takes various dimensions such as the planning of a communicative event, the control of the setting of the discourse, the power to control various dimensions, of talk and text such as the decision regarding the language to be used and the scope and control one has over the audience (Van Dijk 1996, 87-88).

To the extent that journalists have the privilege to 'impart certain social truths' (Hobbs, 2008, 11) to citizens they have the prerogative to influence their knowledge and attitudes. Pitsoe and Letseka (2013, 24) correctly assert that "as a social construct, discourse is created and perpetuated by those who have access to the means of communication".

The power of the press lies in its privilege to decide what to put on the public agenda (agenda setting) what interpretative frameworks to ascribe to particular issues (framing) and how much importance to attach to those topics (salience).

Thus discursive power entails the exercise of control over the discourse itself. Journalists, as "symbolic elites", (Van-Dijk (1999, 28) do not only control the material production of discourse, but also its packaging and circulation.

To a certain degree, they determine the topics or stories to be covered, the amount of space devoted to the stories, placement in the newspaper, the genre to be used, the style, and rhetorical, and lexical devices to be used in a particular story and the sources to be used in those stories. This acts as an exercise of power as well as a form of legitimating power.

Through its representations the press shapes the social cognitions of others while giving other people (news sources) to voice their opinions is a way of legitimating the views of those people given access to articulate their points of view. This shows that discourse is constituted by inclusions and exclusions (Pitsoe and Letseka 2013, 25).

Journalistic discourses thrive on selectivity as a mechanism for enacting power and control in that what qualifies as news is based on ideological and professional values that give media access to elites and institutional voices (van Dijk 1999, 43). However, it would be misleading to create the impression that the less powerful in society are totally absent in the media. Many newspapers have letters to the editor-columns where readers voice their opinions.

New communication technologies such as the Internet have further leveraged the citizens through generation of their own content online (User Generated Content) thereby, signaling a form of participatory communication. This argument, however, needs to be tempered because access to the Internet is also a function of economic power particularly in the developing world where very few people have access to the Internet is a function of economic power, and very few people have access to the internet, let alone to the computer (Nyamnjoh 1996). In addition, audience-controlled discursive platforms such as the letters to the editor are subjected to selection and editing, depending on ideological, professional and other considerations. This shows how power is manifested through the control of access to journalistic discourse. Denying access to other points of view as a strategy of exercising power in discourse means the audience is denied an opportunity to access other claims to truths and as argued below, this demonstrates the link between knowledge and power.

Discursive power is never confined to content, but also exists in structures of discourse. Thus when scrutinizing media texts it is vital to pay attention to who is saying what, to whom, in what context and how, in order to have a broader understanding of the various dimensions through which power is exercised discursively.

At the content level discursive power manifests itself in a subtle way. Power in discourse is manifested indirectly as "representation in the form of an expression, description or legitimation of powerful actors or their actions and ideologies" (Van Dijk 1999, 49). Without discourse, power cannot easily be gained, exercised or legitimated because it is through discourse that social cognitions are constituted. Van Dijk (1999, 45) notes that knowledge acquisition and opinion formation about most world events is mainly based on news discourse and there is no discourse type that is as pervasive and globally shared as the news.

Foucault (1972b) equates discourse with knowledge and knowledge with power. He argues that reality is socially constructed and because of that discourse joins power and knowledge.

Pitsoe and Letseka (2013,25) conceive discourse as a way of constituting knowledge as well as a vehicle for transmitting power, adding that power and knowledge are two sides of the same coin. While knowledge does not reflect power relations it is "imminent in power relations". Power manifests itself as hegemony whereby the dominated class may unconsciously collaborate with the dominant class. Media discourses are hegemonic in that they depict reality in a taken-for granted, commonsensical way. They constitute knowledge in that they project a particular worldview. Media discourses embody meaning and social relationships in a subtle way.

Foucault (1972, 49) argues that discourses are not about objects, neither do they identify objects, but they constitute them and in the process masking their own intentions the same way social practices spread beliefs in a commonsensical way. In the news media, some news sources are given access and the latitude to propound their points of view thereby generating meanings that legitimate and reproduce existing power relations in society. Thus unequal access to media discourses perpetuates power inequalities in society, because the dominating class speaks for and in its interests. This does not mean that power is a totalizing magic bullet. Foucault (1972) acknowledges this as much when he points out that power is never absolute and dominated classes always try to challenge the dominant class in various ways.

The constitutive nature of discourse implies that discourse is both an effect and an instrument of power. As much as reality is a social construct it can be deconstructed or reconstructed. Thus, Foucault sees discourse as both a form of gaining power as well as a "starting point for an opposing strategy" (1978, 101).

2.8 Social Construction Theory of the Media

As mentioned above, Foucault's discourse theory has implications for the media which stem from its contention that discourse "produces the meaning of objects" (Hobbs 2008, 8). The Social Construction Theory explains how meaning and reality are created by the media and how this reality creating enterprise of the media shapes public opinion and perceptions.

Inspired by the Constructionist Epistemology, (discussed in Chapter 3), the Social Construction Theory of the media, an offshoot from Berger and Luckman's (1966) seminal work, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, (also discussed in Chapter 3) resonates with the discourse theory's rejection of an objectivist ontology, whereby reality simply exists "out there".

The crux of Berger and Luckman's argument is that "reality is socially constructed" by human beings (Berger and Luckman 1966, 13). This means that society is a human product which has no "other being except that which is bestowed upon it by human activity and consciousness". There can be no social reality from man" (Berger and Luckman cited in Gordon 1983, 49-50). One more very pertinent point made by Berger and Luckman is that; man is a product of society and individuals are born into an already existing social world, and as Gordon (1983, 50) contends, man "achieves and maintains his identity" in the pre-existing world. Similarly, in a media saturated society where people are daily bombarded with media generated images and symbols, the media have become the principal constructor of reality.

Gamson et al (1992, 374) assert that:

> We walk around with media generated images of the world using them to construct meaning about political and social issues. The lens through which we receive these images is not neutral, but evinces the power and point of view of the political and economic elites who operate and focus it. And the special genius of all this is to make the whole process seem so normal and natural that the very art of social construction is invisible (Gamson et al 1992374).

The pervasiveness of media reality is succinctly captured by Bal and De Vries (2000, 3) who assert that "Whatever we know about society, or indeed about the world in which we live, we know through the mass media". Hall adds that the mass media define reality through their "active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping; not merely the transmitting of an already – existing meaning, but the more active labour of making things mean" (cited in Dispensa and Brulle (2003 79).

Luen-Wun Siu (2006, 4) identifies four basic assumptions behind the social construction theory, namely "reality does not present itself objectively" but is understood through human experience, social interactions determine categories of language, the construction of reality is determined by particular conventions of communication and communication behavior constitutes the construction of reality.

As much as meaning requires discourse for it to be meaningful, reality construction also needs language for it to be meaningful, (Hall cited in Luen-Wun Siu 2006, 4) hence the media are invested with power to make things meaningful. This brings the spotlight to the centrality of language in the social construction of reality; the same way language has been identified to be vital in discourse.

The meaning fixing mechanics of the media entail a whole range of techniques of choice-making, selection, descriptions, inclusion and exclusion, salience/suppression, naming and framing. The discretionary power of the press is demonstrated through the use of certain metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, lexical choices, source selection, graphics, stereotypes, dramatic characters (Van Gorp 2008) and the entire package of "emphasis and presentation" (Gitlin 1980, 6).

In the specific context of this thesis the press decided what incidents of violence to publish and what not to publish, whether to give those incidents prominence or how to frame them. As argued in the analysis sections, the reality about election violence was a media reality. Such reality was constructed through selection, salience, silence, and framing and the press discourses discussed in Chapter Five and Six are a product of this social construction process.

Entman (1993, 52) defines framing as

...to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (emphasis original).

Through framing the press can either define election violence narrowly or broadly depending on their agenda. Since frames are located in various places in the communication process key elements of violence, namely (i) tactics of violence (ii) perpetrators of violence (iii) participants

in violence (iv) the venues of violence (v) timing of violence and (vi) victims of violence (Meadow, 2009) become active fields for framing. Through framing the press could either legitimize or de-legitimise certain political actors. News framing implies that political, economic and social events and issues are presented to citizens as alternative characterizations of a course of action

The way in which the media frame violence can cause people to think in a certain way about the perpetrators or victims of violence. It can also cause people to think about the causes of the violence, the seriousness of the violence and the solution to the problem of violence. Because framing enables one to identify the press's operational frameworks - what is said, how it is said, what is omitted, what is emphasized or downplayed, one gains insights on the manner in which the press relates to the citizens as the imagined audience. People can extract nuanced meanings of election violence in both the press and citizen discourses. However, as the analysis reveals, the reality constructed by the media is not uncontested, nor do they create one reality. Carey argues that "what persons create is not merely one reality, but multiple realities. Realities cannot be exhausted by any one symbolic forms, be it scientific, religious, or aesthetic" (cited in Luen-Wun Siu 2006, 3).

The existence of multiple realities implies that even the constructed reality is dynamic, not static. It implies that meanings about phenomena shift, are fluid, are assigned and contested. The latter is of particular significance in this thesis and shall be revisited below. Gamson and Modigliani contend that:

> Media discourse can be conceived of as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to be an issue. A package has an initial structure. At its core is a central organizing idea, or frame, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue… This frame typically implies a range of positions, rather than a single one, allowing for a degree of controversy among those who share a common frame (cited in Luen-Wun Siu (2006, 7).

The existence of multiple realities does not only bring to the fore the malleability of mediated reality, but also validates the argument advanced in this thesis that representation of election violence by the press constitutes versions of reality that can be contested.

The fact that meanings cannot be fixed emboldens the view that media messages open texts which can be read preferentially or oppositionally (Gamson et al 1992, 373), implying that readers or the audience (citizens in this thesis) are able to go beyond the pre-determined meanings supplied by the press (Gamson et al 1992, 373), a point that is canvassed in this thesis as illustrated by citizen discourses in Chapter Seven. However, it is worth noting that in spite of its "powerful effects" inflection, the social construction theory is for understanding how the media construct reality. Its openness enables understanding on how citizens contest the reality of the press by constructing versions of reality about election violence that counter that of the press. This shows that as much as press reality is a social construct, it can also be de-constructed. More importantly, the social construction theory enables one to gain insights on the ambivalent role of the press in election violence, particularly the observation made in this thesis that the press can engender contradictory behaviours among the citizens.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature on political violence and the media and election violence and the media. It was observed that the role of the media in general and the press in particular is an understudied area. A distinction was made between political violence, which encompasses various types of violent conflict and election violence, which takes place before, during and after an election. The causes of election violence were also discussed, highlighting both structural and non-structural factors.

It was observed that the bulk of existing literature focuses on broader political violence (wars, terrorism, demonstrations etc.) and its interface with the media while there are very few studies focusing on the media and election violence, let alone press and citizen discursive constructions of election violence. The existing literature mainly focuses on the experiences of the Western or developed world and very little of is based on the experiences of the developing world, particularly Africa.

The role of the media in political violence, particularly in violent conflicts such as terrorism is a contested arena, with some scholars (mainly, Chalfont 1980) adopting a moralistic stance, arguing that the media should not be instruments of terrorism but should be on the side of the state, while others like Schlesinger (1991) take a more nuanced approach asserting that the media should be independent (and not embedded) in any institution.

This makes the role of the media in political violence an ambivalent one. Thus, the representation of violence is viewed as interpretation of reality because various media are inspired by different ideological standpoints and agendas rather than the search for the 'truth'. Thus media representation of election violence is a contested arena and the discursive approach adopted in this thesis is well suited to exposing these contestations.

It was observed in this chapter that, election violence, like all other types of political violence lends itself to the logic of media newsworthiness because of the element of conflicts and drama inherent in it. However, election violence, as a unique type of political violence is different from other types of political violence in the sense that it takes place in a time

concentrated context and has far reaching implications for democratic practice. Since the bulk of literature on media and political violence is tilted towards an assessment of media performance, either extolling or lamenting the media's coverage of political violence, there is very little scope for understanding election violence in different contests such as fragile societies.

The chapter also discussed the conceptual framework underpinning this thesis, namely mediation, power and discourse and the social construction theory of the media, highlighting the complex social nature of the production, interpretation and consumption of media texts. It demonstrated how discursive constructions of electoral violence by the press constitute an exercise of power and knowledge as well as a strategy for countering power.

The next chapter discusses the thesis's research, design, methodology, data collection and analysis methods.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Research Problem

This study is a qualitative exploration of press and citizen discourses on election violence during Zimbabwe's presidential and parliamentary elections held between 2000 and 2013, in order to gain insights on the role of the press in election violence. Previous studies on political communication have tended to place too much emphasis on media frames while neglecting the way in which the press and citizens construct their lives through talk. Such disarticulation of the political communication process may hinder a broader understanding of how meanings are co-constructed between citizens and political actors.

There is a need for studies that spotlight the political communication process in a more complex way, because the production of political meaning goes beyond the unidirectional conveyance of messages from the media to the audience and entails the exchange of meaning and value between the media, political actors and citizens. Although the press plays a vital role of providing citizens with information for them to make informed choices, this relationship is never unidirectional as citizens are not passive actors devoid of experience or knowledge.

Discourses that uncritically endorse the efficacy of the press as sources of information for democratic development mask the complex relationship between the press and citizens and how this interaction structures political meanings. This study aims at pushing the boundaries of knowledge in political communication by linking press production of political meaning to citizen interpretation of political reality (Van Gorp, 2007).

The study is a departure from approaches that accentuate causal relationships between political communication messages and public opinion and perceptions. Paying attention to how institutionalized discourses coalesce with citizen discourses during electoral contests brings the political communication process in its complexity under the spotlight.

The approach contemplated in this study follows Gamson's argument (cited by Negrine 1996, 128) that we need to think about the media, not as a set of stimuli to which individuals respond, but a site upon which a complex symbolic contest over the interpretation of messages takes place. Juxtaposing citizen and press discourses on election violence may broaden understanding of the meaning of election violence and the role of the press in political conflict. How the press and citizens frame reality about election violence and the values underpinning that framing are issues that are germane to this study.

3.2 The Social Constructionist Epistemology

Research of any kind ought to be underpinned by some philosophical assumptions in relation to what is authentic knowledge and what is not; who is a legitimate producer of knowledge and who is not, or under what conditions (context) is authentic knowledge generated. The fact that the study is mainly concerned with discursive constructions of election violence, which essentially entails systematic disclosure of textual meanings and the accessing of feelings, beliefs, "perspectives", and lived experiences of participants locates it within the realm of the social constructionist epistemology. Galbin (2014, 82) defines social constructionism as "a perspective which believes that a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences".

As a philosophy of knowledge, social constructionism has become one of the dominant perspectives in the human and social sciences. Although it is closely related to, and sometimes interchangeably used with social constructivism, the two are different in that, while social constructivism focuses on the way in which individuals construct meaning or interpret the world around them, social constructionism focuses on the social; the way in which meaning is constructed through social interactions (McNamee 2004; Alvesson and Skoldberg 2009; Andrews 2012; Castello 2013). Gergen (1995) argues that the central concern of social constructionism is to explain the processes through which people describe or interpret events in the world and how they understand themselves.

As a movement, social constructionism has its roots in the late 1960s and is mainly associated with Berger and Luckman, who, in their seminal book, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966, 2) stated that they sought to "clarify the foundations of knowledge in everyday life", implying that world events are predefined, allusion to Marx, Nietzsche, Scheler, Mannheim and other pioneers in the social constructionism movement's skepticism on the "existence of objective knowledge" and their contention that "knowledge arises from processes more related to ideology, interests or power" (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2009, 25).

Berger and Luckman asserted that:

> Common-sense 'knowledge' rather than 'ideas' must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge, it is precisely this 'knowledge' that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist. The sociology of knowledge, therefore, must concern itself with the social construction of reality (cited in Alvesson and Skoldberg 2009, 25).

The overarching concern of social constructionism, therefore, is meaning and power, concepts that link up with the Foucauldian discursive approach discussed in Chapter 2. Although social constructionism comes in different guises (Lock and Strong 2010), the common thread connecting these various versions is their preoccupation with "meaning and understanding". White (2004, 7) argues that people construct meanings according to their life experiences and contexts. Unearthing these meanings is the forte of the discourse analyst. The dilemma is that, the discourse analyst is differently located, and also constructs meanings through his or her interpretation of reality. These meanings may be at odds with other versions of meanings constructed, thereby raising the problematic of positionality and the need for the researcher to reflect on how their own assumptions impact on the research process - an issue that will be revisited later in this chapter. The meaning-making enterprise is embedded in everyday social-cultural practices and particular events mean different things in different times and places (Lock and Strong 2010), thus bringing to focus the multi-faceted perspectives of social constructionism.

Social constructionism rejects the positivist view that data already exists, positing that data must be uncovered. That social constructionists believe that reality is socially constructed rather than "merely there" (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2009, 23) meaning that data has to be disclosed by pricking holes in texts. As demonstrated in this thesis, the discourse analytic approach deployed lends itself to the task of "pricking holes" in the text as it is premised on the assumption that there are different regimes of truth in relation to particular event. The approach resonates with Durkheim's contention that "social facts should be viewed as "things" (cited in Alvesson and Skoldberg 2009, 25) which means that social facts need to be unpacked.

It is instructive to note that because reality is constructed through social interactions and language (generally referred to as discourse in this thesis) discovering the various regimes of truth about a phenomenon (election violence in this thesis) entails scrutinizing both manifest and latent meanings in texts and how those meanings are implicated in power relations.

The centrality of language in social constructionism is clearly demonstrated in Berger and Luckman's assertion that the language which is used in everyday life objectifies and provides the order with which human beings make sense of everyday life (Berger and Luckman 1966, 22). Language provides "coordinates" of life in the sense that it designates places, defines human relationships, and gives legitimacy to institutions (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2009). Thus Cojocaru et al. (2012, 32) assert that the language that people use to describe the world is a "social artifact" and "the product of historical exchanges between people".

The import of this statement is that language is implicated in power relations, and the way people use language reflects their social location, gender and culture. Cojocaru et al. (2012, 32) elaborate this point thus:

> Language, communication, and discourse are considered means of interaction between individuals who construct multiple realities. Social constructionism considers that realities are created by people who communicate through language, each of them, influencing and limiting the responses of the other (Cojocaru et al. 2012, 32)

This means that social constructionism views reality as co-constructed through social interactions, thus evoking the idea of hybridity, and of multiple perspectives in meanings as opposed to the idea of a singular 'truth'. Thus, social constructionism has resonance with Michel

Foucault's idea of "regimes of truth" which alludes to the possibility of different versions of reality of an event or issue. The view that knowledge is constructed through the individual's interaction with subjects in specific social contexts is what motivated this researcher to adopt the research design selected for this study.

3.3 The Research Design

Previous studies on political communication have predominantly adopted the quantitative research design because they sought to demonstrate a causal relationship between the media and political behavior (Lazarsfeld et al 1948; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; McCombs and Shaw 1972; Goffman, 1994; Hughes and Guerrero 2009; Groeling 2013). Following the assertion by Priest (1996) that the choice of method is largely dictated by the nature of the problem at hand, this study adopted a qualitative research design. Henning et al (2004, 36) concur with this view, pointing out that "a design type is a reflection of the methodological requirements of the research question and therefore the type of data that will be elicited and of how the data will be processed". The selection of a research design is, therefore, a direct response to epistemological as well as practical considerations. The fact that this thesis seeks to explore meanings that are embedded in texts and talk makes a qualitative research design suitable. The fact that the study maps out shifting discourses across time, between the state-owned and the privately-owned press as well as between citizens thus locates it in the realm of a longitudinal study. Such a comparison was crucial in the sense that a key element of discourse, at least from a Foucaldian perspective is that discourse is conditioned and shaped by context.

Through qualitative research, researchers seek to immerse themselves in naturally occurring data so that they have a first-hand experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Silverstone 1993, 20). Social constructionist epistemology falls under the interpretivist paradigm (Goldkhul 2012) and acknowledges the fact that "facts and values cannot be separated" as the researcher brings their own biases and interpretations to bear on the research process, (Vine 2009). This necessitates the researcher having to suspend his/her values and assumptions when they conduct the research (Vine 2009).

The interpretivism embedded in social constructionism enables the researcher to understand "subjective meanings…to acknowledge their existence, to reconstruct them, to understand them, to avoid distorting them, to use them as building blocks in theorizing" (Goldkuhl 2012, 5). Citing Lein and Meyers, Rowlands asserts that:

> …the foundation assumption for interpretive research is that knowledge is gained, or at least filtered, through social constructions such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings in addition to the emphasis on the socially constructed nature of the reality, interpretive research, acknowledges the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being explored, and the situational constraints shaping this process (Rowlands (2005, 81).

Bryman characterizes qualitative research using six point criteria, namely 'Seeing through the eyes of …' or taking the subject's perspective, 'describing the mundane detail of everyday settings', 'understanding actions and meanings in their social context', 'emphasizing time and process', 'favouring open and relatively unstructured research designs', and 'avoiding concepts and theories at an early stage' (Bryman, cited in Silverstone 1993, 24). Although this characterisation of qualitative research appears too broad to risk generalization, it captures the essence of qualitative research; namely, its preoccupation with explication of "the subject's interpretation of social reality" (Silverstone 1993, 24).

Adopting a qualitative research design enabled the researcher to use flexible data collection methods such as the semi-structured interview, thereby allowing him to interact with subjects in their natural setting. Gray (2009, 166) acknowledges the flexibility of the qualitative research design when he notes that the qualitative research design enables the researcher to go beyond giving "a mere snapshot or cross-section of events and can show how and why things happen-also incorporating people's own motivation, emotion, prejudices and incidents of interpersonal cooperation and conflict".

As demonstrated in the data analysis sections, interviews with journalists/editors and with 'citizens', did not only enable the researcher to elicit data on how the press and citizens discursively construct election violence, but also to gather data on the rationale of such discursive constructions.

Intense and intimate contact with participants enabled the researcher to formulate opinions on the basis of observations in the field of study and to gain insights on "tacit knowledge" (discussed later in this chapter) through observation of their emotions, feelings, prejudices and motivations (Gray 2009), meaning that the researcher could incorporate the voices of the participants verbatim, as demonstrated in Chapter Five, Six and Seven.

However, because social constructionism is so broad that it encompasses a "mosaic" (Gubrium and Holstein 2008, 3) of approaches, the researcher was able to focus on discourses embedded in press texts as well as his epistemic position and that of his subjects by zeroing in on "face-to-face interactions through semi-structured interviews" (Gubrium and Holstein 2008). Flick (cited by Gray 2009, 67) argues that the fact that qualitative designs enable the researcher to incorporate his interpretations and those of the participants. It is imperative that the researcher reflects on their own actions and observations and such reflections become part of the data. To this extent, this researcher found it prudent to give a more elaborate reflection on his positionality as demonstrated later in this chapter. Similarly, Merkl-Davis et al., (2014, 1) concur with the need for reflexivity by the researcher in their assertion that "in discourse analysis, researcher biases need to be acknowledged to reflect the view of the constructed nature of knowledge".

3.4. Data Collection

3.4.1 Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure used in this study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, a type of non-probability type of sampling which enables the researcher to obtain insights into "particular practices that exist within a specific location, context and time" (Gray 2009, 180) was used to identify newspaper articles that would give the richest data on election violence during the five elections held between 2000 and 2013. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, the electoral field in Zimbabwe during the period under study was heavily polarized and conflict-ridden. These conflicts manifested themselves in verbal animosity and election violence.

Elections in Zimbabwe have historically been marred by violence since independence in 1980. However, election violence reached unprecedented levels after the watershed referendum of 2000. While the specific reasons for this are debatable and outside the purview of this thesis, popular opinion attributes this to the emergence of a credible and 'popular' opposition party. Unlike previous elections which had been characterized by apathy and the dominance of the ruling party, ZANU (PF), the emergence of a strong opposition party and the crises afflicting the country at the time spurred citizens to partake in political action.

The enormous amount of textual data on election violence, the large number of newspapers involved, coupled with the length of the study period made purposive sampling a more suitable procedure for the study as it enabled the researcher to identify information-rich newspaper articles which could be used to explore the issue at hand (Patton, cited in Gray 2009, 180). As discussed in Chapter One, six newspapers selected for this study were considered to be the main sources of news and information on political issues in the country as demonstrated in surveys by the Zimbabwe All Media Products Survey (ZAMPS). A ZAMPS survey released in revealed that the *The Herald* had a readership of 799 950, *The Sunday Mail*, had 658 166 readers, and *The Daily News* (the second highest in the daily news market) was read by 571 581 people. *The Financial Gazette* and the *Zimbabwe Independent* were read by 92 215 and 72 833 respectively.

As already noted in Chapter One, the *Daily News* was closed in September 2003 (re-registered in March 2011), after failing to comply with the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), meaning that the newspaper only covered three elections, the 2000 parliamentary elections, the 2002 presidential elections and the 2013 harmonised elections. Its inclusion was therefore strategic in the sense that before its closure it had torpedoed the state-owned daily, *The Herald* with its print run shooting from 60 000 to 120 000 (compared to The Herald's 90 000) (Moyo 2005 113), hence the *Daily News* was a key player in the media industry during the period under study.

3.4.2 Fieldwork

Field work for this study was done in three phases, namely, the textual data collection phase, interviews with citizens and interviews with journalists and editors. The collection of archival newspaper articles, took place between 1 January 2012 and 31 January 2014. This process took much longer than anticipated because the researcher travelled from South Africa where he is a full-time employee.

Each visit to the National Archives of Zimbabwe lasted approximately two weeks when the researcher was either granted special leave by the employer or during the university semester breaks. The interludes in the data collection process did not just mean a loss of momentum in the research process, but also deferment of the interview process which was scheduled to begin after the textual data collection process had been concluded. The rationale for conducting the interviews after finishing collecting the textual data was that it would be possible to relate the interview data to the textual data.

Given that the textual data primarily addressed how the press represented election violence, interview data, from journalists and editors mainly spoke to the WHY component of the research question. Hence, during the interviews with the journalists and editors the researcher carried with him some samples of newspaper cuttings and asked the interviewees to explain why their newspaper represented election violence in the manner reflected in specific newspaper.

As the analysis in Chapter Five and Six indicates, data from interviews with journalists and editors of newspapers complemented the textual data in that, the interview data enabled the researcher to gain deeper insights on why the press reported election violence in the manner they did. These insights could not be obtained by merely analysing the textual data. In this respect, the textual data took precedence over the textual data.

Although the researcher could have used a research assistant to help with the collection of textual data at the National Archives of Zimbabwe and with coding it, doing it himself turned out to be more beneficial in terms of gaining a foothold on the insights emerging from the data.

Being directly involved in the collection of the textual data enabled the researcher to figure out the key themes emerging from the textual data, resulting in more clarity on the findings of the study. It also enabled the researcher to focus the attention of the respondents on questions that directly addressed the key objectives of the study, based on the representational patterns observed in the newspaper archival material. Inevitably the data analysis process started as early as the data collection process and continued up to the writing of the thesis.

The second phase of data collection entailed conducting interviews with purposively selected members of the public, hereafter, referred to as 'citizens' who are regular readers of the newspapers selected for the study. Interviews with citizens took place between the 8th and 19th of July 2013, in the capital city of Zimbabwe, Harare (**see Appendix 2.1**). Although the timing of the first segment of the interviews was mainly determined by the exigencies of work commitments and availability of time referred to earlier, it was nevertheless significant in the sense that this coincided with the election campaign period for the 31 July 2013 harmonised elections. There were many challenges attendant on embarking on a research of this nature during a campaign period in a political context such as that of Zimbabwe, where a climate of fear is pervasive. What was more significant was that the 2013 harmonised elections came after the 2008 presidential election run-off election which is generally perceived by both the public and the media to be the bloodiest election in Zimbabwe's electoral history, a sentiment which recurred in the interviews with 'citizens' as well as the textual data (see the discussion on 'memorialisation' in Chapter Six).

As demonstrated later in this chapter, the sensitivity of the issue of election violence meant conducting this research constituted a risk for the researcher and the respondents. The pervasive climate of fear, particularly during the time the study was conducted could mean that the results could be skewed by what previous studies on public opinion polling have referred to as "the margin of terror", meaning, the biasing or distortion of opinions or perceptions on politics which result from "conditions of widespread political violence" (Bratton and Masunungure 2012, 1).

The need to guard against this risk partly necessitated the use of the purposive sampling strategy adopted for the study, whereby the researcher deliberately looked for respondents who were not just knowledgeable about the issues at hand, but also were willing to express themselves as freely as possible about the topic at hand, an issue that will be revisited in greater detail below. The timing of the interviews could, however, be said to be an advantage in the sense that it afforded the researcher an opportunity to have the "authentic" experience of election violence, thereby gaining insights on nuances that could have been lost had the interviews been conducted outside the context of an election.

A looming election enabled the respondents to speak in a particular way and to mobilize a repertoire of discourses that reflected their 'authentic' (unmediated by third parties or the media) experiences about elections in Zimbabwe. Since the 2013 election triggered memories of the previous elections (see discussion in Chapter Six) respondents became more articulate when talking about press representation of election violence, thus enabling the researcher to obtain enough data to reach saturation. There is, however, an obvious limitation in the selection of respondents in this category which relates to the class position and geography of the respondents in this category. This point will be revisited later in this chapter.

The third and last phase of the field work involved interviewing selected journalists and editors of the newspapers included in the study and had two segments. The first segment of interviews took place between the 2nd and the 7th of September 2013, also in Harare, which was about one month after the 2013 harmonised elections. The second segment entailed follow-ups with respondents who had been interviewed in the first segment, as well as the recruitment of more respondents to fill information gaps which were apparent after the first round of interviews with journalists and editors.

The selection of participants in this category was largely dictated by their experience in reporting elections between 2000 and 2013 and their ability to relate, in an articulate manner (including the ability to recall events and trends dating back to 2000), their experiences in reporting election violence, and in particular, why they (or the newspapers they worked for) represented election violence in the manner they did.

The follow-up interviews targeted journalists and editors who had been previously interviewed and those that the researcher had not managed to get hold of during the first round of the interviews and were conducted between 11 and 15 May 2015. Significant to note is that, only one of the journalists was female, perhaps a reflection of the fact that political journalism and the editorship of newspapers in Zimbabwe is dominated by men.

In some cases the second round of interviews (three respondents were interviewed twice) became a 'gap-filling' and data validation exercise in the sense that the respondents had been interviewed in the first round of interviews undertaken in 2013, but there had not been enough time for the interviews. Others were being interviewed for the first time because the researcher had not been able to get hold of them. Details of the interviewees are shown in Table 3.3 below.

The field work experience was a mixture of rewards and challenges owing to contextual factors and the sensitivity of the topic under investigation. Getting respondents who were willing to express themselves about the subject was a daunting task. At the same time being able to recruit respondents who were willing to openly share their experiences about this sensitive topic was gratifying.

3.4.3 Archival Search

As pointed out earlier, textual data was obtained from the six newspapers targeted for the study. The textual material was obtained from the National Archives of Zimbabwe were archival material for all publications is kept. Relevant articles were identified, retrieved and photocopied This process was guided by the principle that in qualitative research, samples sizes should, neither be too large to be able to extract rich data, nor should they be too small to hinder the researcher from achieving data saturation (Onwuegbuzie and Leech cited in Gary 2009,182). Thus, the first two days at the National Archives of Zimbabwe were spent trying to determine the quantity of news articles on election violence during the period under study before coming up with cut-off dates.

After scanning the first few editions of two of the weekly newspapers the decision to use a random sampling procedure was dropped because this would yield too small a number of news articles to enable any meaningful analysis.

The initial decision to include only front page stories and commentaries was also abandoned after realizing that there were some articles with rich information in other pages which could help advance the objectives of the study.

"Letters to the editor" which had been originally included were also excluded because including them would broaden the scope of the study beyond what was desired by the researcher. Ultimately, the researcher decided to include all cases which had the potential to yield "rich" data on election violence. This included hard news, editorials, feature and opinion articles on any page of the selected newspapers published six weeks before and two weeks after an election.

The researcher checked every newspaper published within the eight-week period, selecting only those articles that were more than three hundred words[3] long and dwelt on "election violence" to a considerable degree. Since the study combined newspapers with varying publication frequency (i.e. daily and weekly newspapers), surveying every edition was found to be more useful in addressing the objectives of the study as well as ensuring that there was sufficient and 'rich' textual data from every newspaper selected to enable the researcher to establish distinct thematic frames on election violence. This also ensured that the number of articles selected was kept within manageable limits so as to guard against unmanageable volumes of data. Selecting newspaper articles in this way ensured the selection of rich cases and also enabled the researcher to establish distinct themes that were principally derived from the research questions of the study. This sampling procedure also ensured that textual material covered the full electoral cycle, namely, the pre-election period, the voting period and the post-election period, which covered the proclamation of results.

It is however, worth noting that the post-election period of the 29 March harmonized elections overlapped into a campaign period of the presidential run-off which was held on June 27, 2008. Because the results of this particular election were delayed, campaigning for the run-off election started immediately after the release of the release of the harmonized elections. This means that only two weeks of textual data were left out (see table 3.2 below).

[3] Three hundred words is ordinarily considered the standard hard news article.

Given the purposive nature of the study, the researcher did not believe that these two weeks could have skewed the findings in any significant way.

Overall, a total of 766 newspaper articles were identified and analysed. *Table* 3.1 below displays the number of news articles from the different newspapers.

Table 3.1: Distribution of newspaper articles according to newspaper title

Newspaper	**Number of Articles**
The Herald	308
The Sunday Mail	71
Daily News	207
Financial Gazette	82
Zimbabwe Independent	75
Newsday	23
TOTAL	**766**

As shown in *Table* 3.1 above 308 were from *The Herald* 71 from *The Sunday Mail 207* the *Daily News* 75 from *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 82 from the *Financial Gazette and 23 from News Day*. *Table* 3.2 below shows the elections selected for this study and the sampling dates for the elections.

***Table 3.2:** Election dates and sampling dates*

Election and Date Held	**Sampling Dates**
General Election June 24-25, 2000	7 May-9 July, 2000
Presidential Election, March 9-11, 2002	23 January-25 March 2002
Parliamentary and Senatorial Election, 31 March, 2005	1 February-14 April, 2005
Harmonised Elections, 29 March, 2008	29 January-12 April, 2008
Presidential Run-off Election, 27 June, 2008	27 April-4 July 2008
Harmonised Elections, 31 July 2013	14 June- 14 August 2013

3.4.4 Semi-structured Interviews

> *Interviews enable participants…to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable* (Cohen et al. 2001:267).

The above quotation is an apt summation of the philosophy which underpins interviews in general and semi-structured interviews in particular. The nature of the research problem and research questions in this study necessitated the deployment of an approach that views human subjects as best qualified to report their own experiences about particular events.

Darlington and Scott (2002, 369) argue that the best data collection research approach is one that yields data that address the purpose of the study and answer the research questions.

Thus, in order to complement textual data from the archives, and also generate additional data on the way in which citizens talk about election violence, semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposively selected journalists and editors from all the newspapers selected for the study. Arksey and Knight (cited in Gray 2009, 370) argue that "interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit- to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings".

Semi-structured interviews were, therefore, more suited to gleaning insights on the discursive construction of election violence in the sense that the social constructionist epistemology which guides this study foregrounds the idea that "language is more than a mere mirror of the world and the phenomenon 'out-there', and the conviction that discourse is of central importance in constructing the ideas, social processes and the phenomena that make up our social world" (Nikader 2008, 413). Thus, interviews are more useful when exploring "subjective meanings that respondents ascribe to concepts or events" (Gray 2009, 373).

The initial target was to interview at least one editor and one political reporter per newspaper, but realizing, that because of the time lapse some editors and journalists who could have provided rich data had either left the employ of certain newspapers or emigrated into the Diaspora[4], the selection of respondents became more dictated by accessibility, while at the same time ensuring that every newspaper was adequately represented. The rationale for involving editors was that they are considered the custodians of the editorial policy of their newspapers and have authority to articulate the newspaper's editorial stance on key issues. Because the researcher knows the names of all the editors (although he had not previously met three of them) he contacted them telephonically in order to schedule an appointment. However, accessing editors and journalists proved to be difficult (including those he knew already) because of tight newsroom production deadlines, especially those working for daily newspapers, and also due to the climate of fear and suspicion already mentioned above (particularly in the case of those he did not know or had not met before).

[4] As mentioned in chapter 4, the country experienced a huge out-migration of journalists at the turn of the century.

In order to get around this problem the researcher relied on referrals by acquaintances and contacts in the media industry to reach participants, in a 'snowball-like' sampling strategy. However, even after such referrals it was not possible to interview everybody who had been targeted. In one case the researcher had to cancel an interview with an editor after spending seven hours waiting for a potential participant in a car park in the capital city, Harare. The potential participant had promised to "call back in 30 minutes" but the call never came. Any attempts to call him at intervals of one hour, reminding him that the researcher was still waiting for his call would be received with the promise that "I will call you now, I am still busy". In order to make-up for this interview, the researcher had to look for a retired editor who once worked for the same paper in early 2000 and beyond to tap on his views in relation to why the newspaper reported on election violence in the way it did.

Whereas the timing of the interviews was an obstacle to accessing participants who were willing to talk, it enabled the researcher to appreciate the people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour in vis-à-vis election violence as a subject and its corrosive effects on the political and electoral environment. It is inevitable that these and other subjective experiences during the interviewing process might have coloured the researcher's outlook and assumptions during the data interpretation process. It is worth noting that while the pervasiveness of fear is acknowledged in so far as it made the recruitment of participants an onerous task, it did not necessarily affect the results as most of the respondents who agreed to participate in the study spoke freely.

All the editors interviewed consented to their names being revealed in the study. One editor of a privately-owned newspaper actually stated that he was not afraid at all to have his name mentioned in the study because he was "speaking the truth". One realises that, being journalists, their views are already in the public domain and there was possibly no bigger political risk than the real fact of practising journalism in Zimbabwe, where the media laws are restrictive. Overall, a total of eight (8) political journalists and eleven (11) editors participated in the research. *Table* 3.3 below shows the distribution of the respondents according to newspaper organization and occupation.

Table 3.3 : ***Distribution of respondents according to organization and occupation***

Newspaper	**Number of Editors**	**Number of political reporters**	Total
The Herald	3	2	5
The Sunday Mail	2	1	3
Newsday	2	1	3
Daily News	1	-	1
The Zimbabwe Independent	2	3	5
The Financial Gazette	1	1	2
Total	11	8	19

As shown in *Table* 3.3 above, a total of 19 media practitioners participated in the study, of which eight (8) were from the state-owned press and eleven (11) from the privately-owned press. Due to the fact that the study period spans a period of thirteen (13) years (2000-2013) and the high turn-over in the newsrooms, particularly editorships, a conscious effort was made to ensure that participants who had institutional memory of the different newspapers were included.

The high number of editors thus includes those who once edited the newspapers but had left the organization. The idea was to get a holistic picture of how the various newspapers were reporting on election violence during the entire period of the study. Equally significant is the fact that all the editors (except three) included in the study had at one time occupied the position of political reporter or had reported on political issues in their organization before their elevation to editorship. With regards to the journalists, the idea was to target political reporters, who are in most cases are senior journalists in the newsroom, and have had considerable experience in reporting elections.

This meant that the participants in the study had a wealth of experience in political issues in Zimbabwe and could speak authoritatively on matters of election violence. The interviews lasted between twenty-five (25) minutes and thirty (30) minutes and all of them (except one) were conducted in the newsroom, the natural habitat of media practitioners.

Conducting interviews in the 'natural habitat' of the journalists was beneficial in the sense that it enabled the researcher to have an appreciation of the dynamics of news production and to observe his participants in an appropriate setting, and to better appreciate how that setting shaped news products. For instance, while interviewing an editor of a privately-owned newspaper the telephone rang and he answered it.

On the other end of the line could be heard a male voice. It turned out that the person was an official from the Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services, who upon an instruction from the deputy minister was disputing a story that had been published by the newspaper on that day. The editor called the reporter concerned and asked him about the story, telling him that the minister was contradicting his story. Fortunately for the reporter, he had tape-recorded his conversation with the deputy minister. The editor later used the incident to illustrate some points in our conversation and to validate some of his points in relation to why they hold certain views about election violence and why they do not trust politicians who call for peace during the day, while instigating election violence during the night.

Respondents in the category of journalists and editors were mainly asked questions about their experiences on reporting election violence beginning the year 2000 up to 2013, how their newspapers reported elections violence, the constrains they faced and most importantly WHY they reported election violence in the manner they did. In order to ensure consistency in the interviewing process, an interview guide was used and the same questions were used.

Respondents were also shown cuttings of newspaper articles and asked to explain why their newspaper reported the story in the way it did, or why the story had the kind of headline it had, or the kind of language used. As mentioned earlier the idea was to gain deeper insights on the rationale for the representation of election violence by the different newspapers.

Such data was crucial in solidifying observations made during the archival data collection process. All the interviews were conducted in English.

While the data generated from the interviews with media practitioners were primarily meant to complement archival data, the data from interviews with citizens were meant to address the question on citizen discursive constructions of election violence and their evaluation of press performance in reporting election violence. As argued in Chapter Seven the idea is to foreground citizens as agents rather than subjects so as to bring into dialogue their constructed reality with that of the press on the issue of election violence, as discussed in the analysis section (Chapter Seven). Accordingly, empirical data on citizen discursive construction of election violence was generated from interviews with twenty-one (21) purposively sampled Harare- Zimbabwean citizens who are regular readers of the newspapers selected for this study. Although the pre-requisite for inclusion in the study was regular readership of at least two of the newspapers, it turned out that almost all the respondents claimed that they read all the newspapers regularly. Given the socio-economic conditions in the country, it is impossible that a person could read all the newspapers published in the country, but the researcher discerned that respondents who made this claim wanted to show that they were exposed to views from both sides of the political divide. The idea was to include people who had the competence to talk about the way newspapers report on election violence, giving their perspectives, in a manner that would enable the researcher to reach data saturation. The referral method ensured easy identification of participants who were considered by their peers to be knowledgeable on political issues. Thus, regular readership of newspapers and interest in public affairs was used as a yard stick for determining the participants' knowledge.

In a sense, this meant that the data collection process using the semi-structured interview method entailed some kind of data analysis as well. Polokinghorne (cited in Darlington and Scott 2002, 52) advises that in qualitative research participants should have "the capacity to provide full and sensitive descriptions of the experience under investigation", what Darlington and Scott refer to as "articulateness", which arises out of experience with the topic under consideration (2002, 51).

However, the limitation of this sampling strategy was that targeting only those who articulate issues, meant that only those with a certain level of literacy would be included, thus opening the sampling strategy to the charge of elitism, since unlike radio, newspaper consumption requires literacy competence that is slightly above the functional literacy level, that is the ability to access newspaper content in the English language.

In 2013 the country was ranked by *The African Economist Magazine* as having the highest literacy rate on the African continent at 90.7% (*The African Economist Magazine* 2013). In any event, qualitative studies are not censuses and the idea in this thesis was never to strive at a generalisability of findings, but rather, to glean insights on meanings constructed around election violence and the possible impact of such constructions. This is the overriding objective which dictated the identification and selection of respondents in the category of 'citizens'. It is also worth pointing out that the classification 'citizen' should be viewed more as an operational term signifying newspaper reading as a civic duty, than a segregatory label. It connotes people who actively follow political events through the press and are able to interrogate the views contained therein.

As mentioned above, the identification and selection of respondents in this category followed a snowball-like sampling strategy. The process was 'snowball-like' in the sense that the researcher was referred to people by other people, but the snowball chain did not always meet the conditions of a conventional snowball sample in the sense that, due to the sensitivity of the topic and the difficulty in securing subjects, sometimes the snowball chain would break, but the researcher would not start afresh. If the person referred to by the last person refused to participate in the study, the researcher looked for another contact person who then linked him up with another person and the process continued until there were no new views coming out of the interviewees.

While targeting only respondents in Harare could be viewed as a limitation, this drawback was ameliorated by the fact that, as the capital city, Harare is the most cosmopolitan city and is home to all ethnic and racial groups. This means that the charge of ethnic or geographic bias would not arise. The initial encounter with the first 'link' person was rather fortuitous.

As the researcher was travelling to Zimbabwe from South Africa by bus, he sat next to a middle-aged man, a Zimbabwean national who was also going to Harare. A conversation started and they talked about a lot of things, politics included. Although the man had left Zimbabwe a long time ago his knowledge of Zimbabwean politics was compelling. The researcher later explained to him that he was going to do a research on the press and election violence in Zimbabwe and he was looking for people living in Zimbabwe to participate in his research. The man said he knew one such person and would link the researcher up with the person when they got to Harare. It turned out that the person in question was the one who was waiting for him at Roadport, the main international road transport station in Zimbabwe. He became the first interviewee and later linked the researcher up with others, but as mentioned above, the researcher had to look for other contacts to link him up with other participants so as to elicit diverse views.

In the polarized and dichotomised context of Zimbabwean politics where people are perceived to be either Zanu (PF) or opposition (MDC), securing diversity meant having views that lean on both sides. Harare, being an opposition stronghold, this was a daunting task. In a study where political affiliation is not a qualification for participation the process becomes a delicate balancing act.

The approach was to get respondents who expressed totally different views as much as possible in order to avoid getting similar views, which is one of the disadvantages of snowball sampling. Hence, there was also a deliberate need to break the snowball chain if the researcher realized any two consecutive respondents had similar views. To get around the problem of homogeneity of views the researcher looked for people who were known to hold 'extreme' political views from either side of the political divide. In most cases such respondents declared their affiliation during the course of the interviews. For example, someone could just say "Of course myself I am Zanu (PF)" or "Me I don't want to lie, I don't like this government". Hence, both theoretical and practical considerations guided the identification and selection of respondents in the sense that because of resource and time constraints the researcher could not visit many parts of the county and was conscious of the need to avoid the homogeneity of views by keeping an eye on the diversity of views in order to fill certain information gaps. Thus, the selection of respondents was guided by Strauss and Corbin's view that "case analysis" does not

necessarily negate our research questions or statements", but rather adds variation and depth of understanding (cited in Darlington and Scott 2002, 53). After the five interviews, the selection of participants was more guided by the imperative to broaden perspectives on the issue under investigation.

Darlington and Scott add that:

> Where there are many possible experiences of a phenomenon it will be important to talk to people representing a wide range of views and situations to build up a broad understanding of the topic. Even so, in situations where there is relative homogeneity, it would be wise to obtain the maximum number of participants possible in order to document the extent of the views or situations identified and avoid the charge of choosing only the few cases that fitted the researcher's own perspective Darlington and Scott (Darlington and Scott 2002, 52-53)

The most challenging part was balancing the gender representation of the respondents. It was more difficult to get female participants than male participants. Although, structural factors linked with the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society, resulting in more men being empowered through education, the fear factor appears to have contributed to the low number of female participants. More female respondents turned down the request to participate in the study than men. One female respondent terminated the interview after twenty-five (25) minutes, claiming that her boss wanted her to finish some task. Given that historically, women (and children) have been more vulnerable from election violence as they are at the receiving end most of the time, women's apprehension to participate in a study of this nature was quite understandable. Against this background the gender representation in the study was four (4) women and seventeen (17) men.

In terms of education all the respondents had a minimum of Ordinary Level education, with the highest level of education being a Master's Degree. Among the respondents were an airtime vendor[5], a university lecturer, a teacher, a priest, a business woman, a medical student, and a laboratory technician.

[5] A person who sells mobile phone airtime recharge cards.

As indicated in the analysis (Chapter seven) the majority of my participants read almost all the printed newspapers published in Zimbabwe at the time of the study. A few of them read the online versions of the mainstream Zimbabwean newspapers and other online news sources that focus on Zimbabwe. The interviews were held in different places depending on the wishes of the interviewee. Some were held in the researcher's car in the central business district of the capital, Harare, while others were held in the offices of the interviewees. All the respondents were assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their identity.

3.4.5 The Interview Process

Using an interview guide consisting of a list of questions and a tape-recorder, journalists and editors were asked questions relating to their experiences in reporting election violence in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2013 and the rationale for their newspapers representing election violence in a particular way.

Citizens were mainly requested to share their experiences about press representation of election violence in Zimbabwe during the same period and to evaluate the performance of the press in relation to its reportage of election violence. They were able to give their views on their understanding of election violence, the causes of election violence and they also gave a critique of the press's coverage of election violence in Zimbabwe. They were also asked to give their views on the ideal role of the press in election violence. While the interview guide helped to provide an "overall framework" (Rubin and Rubin 1995, 145) of the conversation, there was sufficient flexibility, allowing the researcher to ask probing questions particularly in instances where detail was lacking or if there was ambiguity. In order to show respondents that what they were saying was important and interesting, and also to build rapport with them, the researcher took notes during the interviews even though the interviews were tape-recorded.

Throughout the interviews efforts were made to ensure that the questions directed at the respondents remained focused on the research questions. It was also imperative to adopt a self-reflexive stance, in order to ensure that the responses of the respondents were accurately captured and interpreted.

Respondents were requested to confirm their views throughout the interview process. As demonstrated below, self-reflexivity, bracketing and intuiting (Streubert and Carpenter 1999) were used to ensure that the interpretation of data obtained from respondents was not coloured by the researcher's academic background and previous experience and interactions with media in Zimbabwe. The use of an interview schedule to guide the interview process made it possible to incorporate interesting themes emerging from the interviews. Bryman (1989,149) credits interviews of this nature for giving respondents considerable latitude and for being more responsive to the lines of answering that would have been initiated by the respondents themselves. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview method made it possible for respondents to tell their stories in a natural way, thus enabling the researcher to access some of the most concrete views about the way in which the press and citizens frame election violence during electoral contests.

Borrowing from Rubin and Rubin (1995)'s advice, and through the self-examination process, the researcher sought to check whether the concepts and themes that should be explored were coming out, whether there was enough depth and examples, whether the right questions were being asked, whether his description of the topic was not too broad or too narrow as well as reconsidering his relationship with the interviewee (Rubin and Rubin 1995, 154). However, a constraint associated with the interview method was the fact that respondents were required to reconstruct past events about past elections which had been held between 2000 and 2013. This proved difficult and some of the narratives were either partial or disconnected. Given the changed political and economic circumstances of the country, occasioned by the formation of the Government of National Unity in 2009, it is quite possible that people's perceptions of election violence might have been moderated by the peaceful political context of the Government of National Unity, during which the interviews were conducted, thereby presenting partial narratives, vaguely remembering or skipping some important incidents of election violence. This necessitated the use of follow-up questions to enable respondents to elaborate on incomplete narratives. The researcher was however, mindful of the fact that such follow-ups could subject the respondents to stressful moments, given the time lag.

3.5 Data Analysis and Research Instruments

3.5.1 Discourse Analysis

Since the objective of this study was to examine the discursive construction of election violence by the press and citizens, the preferred method of data analysis was the Foucauldian discourse analytic approach.

Essentially, this necessitates both the examination of discourses through texts, talk and the context in which discourses are constructed. The Foucauldian notion of discourses is of particular relevance in this study because it adheres to the social constructionist premise which views knowledge as a social construction rather than something that is fixed or is simply out there (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 13). The view taken in this thesis is that citizen and press constructions of election violence is not necessarily a reflection of the reality of election violence, but rather, constitutes different regimes of knowledge about election violence in Zimbabwe. The different ideologically located press and citizens construct different versions of reality and their constructions have consequences. Their privilege to construct reality about election violence means that they have power and agency.

As argued in subsequent chapters this power is neither a monopoly of the press nor the citizens, but is "spread across different social practices" (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 13). In this sense, power does not necessarily have to be conceived as oppressive, but "constitutes knowledge, bodies and subjectivities" (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 13). Foucault states that:

> What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression (Foucault 1980, 119).

This statement foregrounds power as ideology rather than as coercion and alludes to the intertwinedness of power with knowledge, an issue that is extensively discussed in Chapter Two. As demonstrated in this thesis power is enacted through the privilege to construct (and promote) particular versions of reality about a phenomenon, thus making election violence a site for the ideological contestation.

Potter and Hepburn (2008, 275) contend that "discourse is the most fundamental medium of action", implying that it is through discourse that the various and competing versions of social reality are constructed, thus making discourse the central foci of study.

The Foucauldian discursive approach adopted in this thesis necessitates broadening the conception of discourse beyond text and talk, to include what Parker describes as "delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in any form that can be given an interpretive gloss" (Parker, cited in Hergaden 2013, 9). Foucault defines discourse as "a group of statements that belong to a single system of formation" (Foucault 1972, 121), thus bringing discourse into the realm of "historical problematisation" (Hergaden 2013, 9) whereby history is not essentialised or viewed in totalizing terms, whereby things are dichotomized into right or wrong, but making a conscious effort to account for differences, transformations, continuities, and discontinuities and to scrutinize the deployment of power. Admittedly, such an approach makes the delimitation of the discourses to be studied an onerous task, the approach enabled the researcher to pay attention to contextual issues as well as knowledge which was not brought to the public domain, be it in the textual analysis or the interviews. The discursive analysis of both the textual and interview data entailed explicating key themes and topics on election violence (thematic analysis) and deep theorizing which entailed engagement with the themes from a theoretical perspective.

3.5.2 Data Preparation

Data preparation entailed transcribing data from tape-recorders and converting field notes into written documents that could be read logically. The researcher preferred doing it himself because it helped him to become more familiar with the data. Apart from transcribing the data the first stage involved the identification of the units of analysis – the "single undivided unit upon which you direct your analysis and express the qualities you perceive in that element" (Chenail 2012, 266). This requires that the researcher clearly identifies "who" or "what" is being studied (Crossman, n.d).

The determination of the units of analysis was influenced by the research questions and the interpretative approach adopted for analyzing the data, whereby the important themes had to be explicated from the data in order to provide descriptions of the ways in which the press and citizens construct reality about election violence.

Different units of analysis conceived at different levels were identified in this study. For the archival textual data, the unity of analysis was the entire hard news article, editorials (commentary) and opinion columns, sentences, phrases and words. Observations made from studying these newspaper articles enabled the researcher to make generalizations about the press and citizen discursive construction. For interview data with journalists, editors and citizens, the unity of analysis was the entire script, sentences/paragraphs, phrases and words. The views of the individual journalists and members of the public were aggregated in order to map out the different perspectives on election violence.

3.5.3 Data Coding and Organization

This process entailed identifying, summarizing, explicating and structuring emerging themes or patterns that speak to the research questions using coding sheets, one for the textual data and another for the interview data. Following Gray's recommendation that coding should start very early during the data collection process for the researcher to familiarize himself with the main issues emerging from the data (Gray 2009, 49), the coding process started during the data collection process and continued during the analysis stage. The code sheets were constructed by folliwng a series of steps suggested by Schneider (2013) thus:

(1) Identifying a set of predetermined set of key themes on election violence based on the research questions and inspired by a thorough reading of the related literature.

(2) Identifying themes emerging from the textual and interview data which the researcher felt could be related to the predetermined themes. Any thematic categories that were found to be too broad were merged.

(3) Revision of the list of categories to reflect the identified categories

(4) Repeating the process with different documents until a final list of coding was established what Marying (cited in Schneider 2013) refers to as evolutionary coding.

(5) Highlighting some sections of the text (archival and interview data) using different colours. This process also entailed marking key words or phrases.

(6) An examination of the structure of the text, checking whether there were any overlaps in discourses, how arguments were structured and examining the context of discourses.

(7) Collecting statements assigned with specific codes and examining their meanings. This collection of statements allowed the researcher to 'map out' the regime of truths established on each major topic (Schneider 2013).

(8) Identifying cultural inferences and how the context of the discourses informed the argument.

(9) Identifying linguistic and rhetorical devices used in the text and how various statements functioned.

(10) Identifying any 'evidentialities' or statements/phrases that appeared to make any statements appear 'common cause' or self-evident.

(11) Interpretation of data, which entailed weaving findings together by explaining what the discourse is all about and how it works.

In order to get a general feel of the main themes emerging from the data the researcher read through the transcribed interview scripts line-by- line, noting down, interesting and significant issues and circling key words and underlining key phrases linked to the research questions. The same process was done for all the newspaper cuttings from the archives. This was followed by more focused reading of both the transcribed data and the newspaper cuttings. The researcher tried to make sense of the data, delineating different discursive patterns, paying particular attention to who was saying what, where, when, and why they were saying what they were saying. This is in line with Elo and Kygnas's advice that researchers should try to "immerse themselves" in the data if meaningful insights are to be gained from the data (2007:109).

In delineating discourses in texts, Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 145-146) advise that one should focus on the following:

- the aspects of the world to which the discourses ascribe meaning;
- the particular ways in which each of the discourses ascribes meaning;

- the points on which there is open struggle between different representations; and
- any understandings naturalized in all the discourses as commonsense (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 145).

Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) recommend that within this framework of analysis, emphasis should be on how discourse changes (or does not change) over time. The fact that this study spans a thirteen-year period means that it lends itself to a mapping out of subtle temporal shifts in discursive constructions of election violence between 2000 and 2013, as is illustrated in the example of 'Chamisa and Madzore case' discussed in Chapter Six.

3.5.4 Drawing Conclusions

This entailed looking for connections between conceptual categories emerging from the data, by carefully examining if any of the concepts relate to the literature section. In order to draw meaningful conclusions from the data the author made inferences and reconstructed meanings from the data by exploring the attributes of the different data sets. Relationships between data categories were also drawn. Quotations that were considered key to addressing the research questions were incorporated in the analysis but the researcher was mindful of Patton's advice that one should "strive for balance between description and interpretation" (cited in Zhang and Wildemuth, n.d).

3.5.5 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) stands out from the ordinary type of discourses analysis in that its primary focus is to uncover group relations of power (Van Dijk 1995b). It could be argued that unlike discourse analysis which is politically uncommitted, critical discourse analysis is a special approach of discourse analysis inspired by the need to discursively expose dominance, inequality and the ways in which these are produced in various discourses, and how such dominance is resisted by dominated groups. Thus, critical discourse analysis exposes "underlying ideologies, that play a role in the reproduction of resistance against dominance or inequality" (Van Dijk 1995b, 18).

While Critical Discourse Analysis shares similar concerns with the Foucauldian discursive analysis in so far as the two are concerned with examining power relations and how these relations are expressed through language, they differ in that the Foucauldian discourse analysis places emphasis on discourse and its intersection with power and knowledge, particularly, how society is shaped by discourse, while Critical Discourse Analysis is imbued with elements of political activism which finds expression in the denunciation of discursive dominance and corporation with dominated groups with a view to empower them.

In this study, the quest to gain knowledge on the way in which the press and citizens construct their social reality necessitated the deployment of a method of data analysis that focuses on discourses in a social context. In order to complement qualitative content analysis critical discourse analysis was used to gain insights on how respondents construct their version of events through discourse in a particular context.

Gray (2009, 515) notes that, unlike content analysis, critical discourse analysis rejects the view that language is a "transparent medium which merely reflects 'reality'. Instead, the starting point of discourses analysis is that reality cannot be accessed outside of discourse, hence it is discourse that should be the object of analysis (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 21).

The discourse analyst has to focus on "what has been actually said or written exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality" (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 21).

Critical discourse analysis concerns itself with understanding the relations of power and inequality in society (Van Dijk 1993; Van Dijk 1995; Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000; Blommaert, 2001). Thus, language is intricately embedded in societal power relations, and through discourses analysis, structures, strategies or properties of texts that are crucial in the production of unequal power relations and dominance are understood.

Critical discourse analysis was found more suited to the study because of its constructivist approach-the stance that reality is a social construct, and the fact that through its use one can go beyond the observational, descriptive and explanatory.

Using critical discourse analysis enabled the researcher to treat texts and talk as being implicated in the construction of relations of power.

The method provided the necessary linkage with the theoretical framework, which rests on the Michael Foucault Discourse Theory and the social construction theory of reality theory. The approach facilitated the interpretation of texts by focusing on discursive practices, individual words, themes, ideas, and views embedded in texts with the ultimate aim of identifying commonly shared patterns about the dynamic relationship between press and citizen discourses on election violence. This is in keeping with Blommaert's assertion that critical discourse analysis enables one to demonstrate the "minute ways" in which discourse, as a symbolic power resource works to generate or articulate power and inequality, (2001,14).

To this extent a three –dimensional approach to conceiving and analyzing discourse was adopted (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2001). Discourse was thus conceived thus:

(i) Discourse as a text: This entailed noting down linguistic features, choice of words, patterns in vocabulary, choice of words, paying attention to concrete textual features in both the semi-structured interview data and textual data from the archives.

(ii) Discourse as a discursive practice: This approach entailed viewing discourse as something that is produced, circulated and consumed in society (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2001:448). Viewing discourse in this way meant that one had to make inferences about the conditions in which various discourses were produced, distributed and circulated. It also attempts to forge links between different texts, i.e. those texts that directly draw upon other texts and those that do so indirectly.

(iii) Discourse as a social practice: This process entailed looking out for ideological and hegemonic uses of texts that are meant to re-order discourse and power relations in society.

(iv) Blommaert and Bulcaen (2001: 449) note that:

> … hegemonies change, and this can be witnessed in discursive change, when the latter is viewed from the angle of inter-textuality. The way in which discourse is being represented, re-spoken, or re-written sheds light on the emergence on the orders of new discourse, struggles over normality, attempts at control, and resistance against regimes of power.

Viewing discourse as a social practice, thus meant making attempts to uncover ways in which social relations impinge on patterns of discourse and social relations, and also treating these relations as problematic rather than given. The observations made from discourse analysis where then integrated with those from critical discourse analysis and subjected to interpretive analysis. However, the constructed nature of knowledge in discourse and critical discourse analysis bring to bear questions about the researcher's influence on the process, necessitating the need for one to reflect on the way in which their values, beliefs and philosophical assumptions may impact on the findings. This is the focus of the next section.

3.6 Reflexivity and Positionality

The qualitative nature of this study implies that the researcher is, as Henning et al., (2004, 7) rightly observes, "…the main instrument of research", meaning that the researcher constructs meaning from their engagement and interpretation of the data. The implications are that the researcher has to reflect on the possible impact of their personal values, beliefs, experiences, their social and political identities, class position, gender, or academic background to ensure that they are able to "present "thick descriptions" with ample empirical evidence" (Henning at al 2004, 7).

Lambert et al (2010, 321) rightly point out that "in qualitative research the researcher aims to situate themselves in the participant's world and to understand the subjective (persona) experiences of their research participants. In doing so, the researcher can turn these subjective experiences into representations that allow interpretation and real insights that apply more generally beyond those individuals studied".

Having adopted a qualitative methodology, the researcher was aware that through this research he was making knowledge claims which are of necessity circumscribed by a particular epistemology, experiences, philosophical assumptions, social, political and economic background and position. It was therefore imperative for him to reflect on how his experiences, assumptions, values, beliefs and background could possibly influence this research right from the conception of the topic, through the literature review and data collection, up to the data interpretation stages of the research (Lambert et al 2010, 321).

Through this thesis the researcher endeavoured to make a contribution to the body of knowledge on media and political conflict in general and the press and election violence in particular, and as Lambert et al (2010, 321) assert, all knowledge is based on theory and inevitably, there are different ways of "understanding and attaining knowledge".

To this extent, the researcher found it vital to situate himself within the experiences of his respondents, primarily because part of the knowledge generated in this study was based on his interpretation of their narratives, and reflecting on his own positionality enabled him to gain deeper insights on the power dynamics between him and his respondents since knowledge claims are always socially situated (Harding, cited in Garatidye 2014, 30). Sultana contends that:

> Knowledges produced thus are within the context of our inter-subjectivities and the places we occupy at the moment (physically and spatially, as well as socially, politically, and institutionally). Knowledge is always partial and representations of knowledges produced through field research embody power relations that the researcher must be aware of in undertaking ethical research (Sultana 2007, 382).

The researcher's professional academic background as an academic studying for a Doctorate at one of South Africa's premier institutions of learning clearly locates him in a class of the privileged. Having emigrated from Zimbabwe to South Africa takes him out (both geographically and class wise) from the world of his participants who bear witness to the economic problems back home in Zimbabwe and are possible targets of, read about or witness election violence during electoral contests. In spite of this geographical displacement from the motherland, the researcher has family members who live in Zimbabwe and frequently visits relatives in rural and urban parts of the country who have varied experiences of election violence.

The researcher hails from a district in Mashonaland province which has been one of the worst affected by political violence. It is however important to point out that none of his immediate family members have been seriously affected by election violence, although, as noted above they have various forms of vicarious experiences of election violence.

The researcher was introduced to Marxism, Critical Theory, Critical Political Economy and Social Constructionism as well as Post-Structuralism in the very early stages of his undergraduate studies at the University of Zimbabwe, where he later became a media studies lecturer for close to a decade. In undergraduate studies, he was exposed to the writings of Frantz Fanon, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Ibekwe Chinweizu, Walter Rodney, Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci.

Ngugi's *Decolonising the Mind,* Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, and Basil Davidson's *The Black Man's Burden*: *Africa and the Curse of the Nation State*, Frantz Fanon's *The Black Skin White Masks* and the *Wretched of The Earth*, and David Korten's *When Corporations Rule the World* were made mandatory preliminary readings for the post-Graduate Media Studies Programme. Among his instructors were a sprinkle of "nationalists", "traditionalists", "anti-colonialists" and neo-Marxist Gramscian scholars.

The researcher later developed interest in Noam Chomsky, and Michael Foucault's works and admired Francis Nyamnjoh, Francis Kasoma and Issa Shiviji's critical approaches to concepts such as democracy and human rights.

As the researcher embarked on this research journey he became acutely aware of the fact his personal experiences and academic background constituted the composite labyrinth of values and beliefs which underpinned his choice of a research topic, the research process, and the choice of literature reviewed, data collection methods and the interpretation of data. In addition, his brief stint with *The Sunday Mirror*, a left-leaning newspaper practising an 'independent nationalist' model of journalism, transcending the political polarisation in the country and "arguably the most analytical and dispassionate source of electoral news" (Chuma 2007, 68), owned by an academic and publisher would also have an influence on his interaction with his respondents, particularly journalists and editors.

Being conscious of these realities required that the researcher needed to be sensitive to his own behaviour and assumptions and the assumptions of his respondents would influence the quality of data, the enquiry process and the way in which knowledge was generated from the interviews.

Many scholars are in agreement that, although it is impossible to completely purge one's personal values and beliefs in a research study, it is critical to be aware of issues such as those articulated above because they shape the research in a significant way, and one has to devise ways of "dealing with their consequences" (Watt 2007, 85). To this extent, throughout the research process the researcher used a reflexive memo to continuously identify and record his own assumptions about the topic under investigation so as to ensure that he did not "impose meanings on the data" (Fischer 2009, 584) and to ensure that all possible meanings present in the data were considered, taking Fischer's advice that in qualitative research, researchers must continuously identify and record their assumptions or hold them in abeyance- a process called bracketing and also continuously question one is earlier understanding of data (Fisher 2009).

According to Fisher (2009, 584), bracketing entails "mindfulness that one brings to bear regularly, asking about assumptions that have gone into how one has "languaged" what was apprehended". Fischer adds that, "It is not possible to view without viewing from somewhere. We do our best to become aware of what that somewhere is, questioning it, owning it in our reports". For Chenail (2012, 2) bracketing entails putting one's "repertoire of knowledge, beliefs, values, and experiences in order to accurately describe participants' life experiences" and a means to demonstrate "the validity of the data collection and analysis process". In the context of this thesis, bracketing entailed a continuous engagement with the data to ensure that prior assumptions about the press's representation of election violence were recorded and shelved, being self-aware and re-examining insights emerging in the data. It also entailed "looking back and inward in a self-aware manner" (Fischer 2009, 583) in order to maintain awareness about his reflexivity so as to position his research and writing (St Louis and Calabrese Barton, 2002).

Continuous engagement, also meant being self-conscious to the language used in reporting the findings as well as developing creative and intuitive strategies to negotiate the various tensions and obstacles in order to minimise "errors of deficiency" (saying less than what the data shows) and "errors of exuberance" (saying more than what the data shows) (Chenail 2012, 2). In order to accomplish this, Chenail (2012, 2) advises that "…we should keep looping back and forth in an iterative or circular manner between the qualitative notation you have assigned to the data (e.g., the category or theme) and the data itself.

In order to guard against errors of deficiency and exuberance, the researcher took St Louis and Calabrese Barton's advice that in reporting findings, there is a need to "foreground the experiences of the people we work with over "theoretical commentary", because "foregrounding the voice of participants makes a statement about what constitutes valid knowledge" (St Louis and Calabrese Barton 2002, 15).

In the specific context of this thesis, privileging the voice of the participants entailed presenting the reality of electoral violence as perceived and experienced by the respondents as demonstrated by a significant amount of direct quotations used in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. This way the researcher tried to minimise his own interpretations by presenting the data as is. It must however, be pointed out that as the researcher employed this strategy he also relied on his own "intuitive and creative inclinations" (Mabweazara 2010, 660) in negotiating the dynamic tensions between what the participants told him (public knowledge) and what they actually knew (tacit knowledge), (Chenail 2012, 2).

Scholars, (see Bussey 2015; Miller 2015; Lin 2013; Markely 2012) acknowledge the power of intuition in accessing the most subtle forms of meanings about human experiences, what, Lin (2013, 471) refers to as the "essence of things". Polanyi (cited in Chenail 2012, 2) asserts that researchers work from the assumption that their research participants "always know more than what they say or make "public knowledge" through our interviews with them or via our data generation activities", thus necessitating the deployment of intuitive capabilities, observation of participants, looking out for cues, probing and asking follow-up questions so that tacit knowledge is brought into the public realm.

Apart from negotiating the various tensions occasioned by his epistemological position and his class position as an academic and doctoral student at a prestigious university, the researcher's other focus of reflexivity was his ambivalent location vis-a vis that of his respondents. He was both an "insider" and an "outsider". He was acutely aware that there could be perceptions about the existence of hierarchies occasioned by the different geographical and class location of his participants and him.

As mentioned earlier, almost all of the respondents in the category of journalists and editors knew the researcher when he was still a faculty member at the University of Zimbabwe, the oldest university in the country, and in its heydays a reputable institution of higher learning on the continent. The researcher had also worked with some of the journalists as an intern at a privately-owned newspaper, and most were familiar with his opinion column at *The Sunday Mirror* which ran between 2002 and 2007. At the same time the researcher was an outsider in the sense that he was not a journalist and had emigrated to the 'Diaspora', meaning that he was perceived as the 'Other'.

The use of a 'snow-ball like' sampling strategy in identifying participants for the "Citizen" category (whom the researcher did not know) meant that he was often introduced to them by his contacts as "a PhD student from Wits University, in South Africa", thus clearly demarcating the researcher and his respondents' different locations, thereby amplifying the researcher's "outsider" status.

On the one hand, the researcher was an insider on account of his previous association with the media as mentioned earlier. He was also an outsider because he was an academic (and a PhD student) and not a practising journalist, meaning that he had "limited knowledge" of the inner intricacies of the media in Zimbabwe. In addition, he was also an outsider, because he was now based outside the country and supposedly not "on pulse" (if not out of touch) with the political developments in the country, and therefore, worth educating. Hence, some of the participants in the category of journalists saw this as an opportunity to "educate" the researcher about the topic because they regarded themselves as the experts as was evidenced by their keenness to talk endlessly on any one issue.

While the outsider status of the researcher caused discomfort and suspicion, resulting, in partial responses, cancellation of scheduled appointments and the rejections mentioned above, it also worked in his favour in the sense that it motivated his respondents to be over-elaborative as they strived to "educate" him on the topic.

Although the researcher listened attentively, he would ask follow-up questions or rephrase the question until he got the desired response. However, for some respondents, because of the suspicion and the climate of fear mentioned earlier, some respondents became too brief in their responses, or talked slowly with calculated and measured responses, making sure that they said the "right" thing.

Before the interview started, one respondent told the researcher that he had been interviewed so many times by people who purported to be researching for academic purposes but he had never seen the final product of the research. The researcher interpreted this to mean that the respondent doubted the authenticity of the researcher's academic research. The respondent took more time scrutinising the researcher's introductory letter, his ethics clearance letter and his student identity card before the interview commenced. As a result, the researcher became too cautious in the manner in which he asked questions, trying to convince the respondent that his research was an authentic academic study. The situation was compounded by the fact that the researcher had brought some archival press cuttings from the newspaper the respondent previously edited. Although the motive of bringing the press cuttings was to facilitate dialogue about how the newspaper had previously reported on election violence, it appeared as if the respondent was being ambushed or being put on the spotlight.

The fact that the focus of the research inquiry was the WHY (as discussed in Chapter Five and Six) did not help matters either, because the respondent felt as if he was being put on the defensive. The researcher had to quickly adjust the style of his questioning having sensed the researcher's discomfort. The researcher became more careful in his questioning and choice of words, and instead of saying "Why did you use such a headline?" he would say "So what was the rationale for having such a news headline in your newspaper?" or "What was the justification for using such words or phrases?" This style of asking questions made a big difference.

How this respondent (a former editor who is well known both locally and internationally) was able to negotiate for a more balanced control of the interview process was significant. Respondents in the category of citizens could not make a similar bargain because of the unequal power relations occasioned by the different social and economic locations between the researcher and his respondents. Suffice to note that the researcher's interaction with this respondent did not just make the researcher develop a more nuanced understanding of the topic he was researching on, but also challenged his own assumptions about what he knew about journalists' self-identification and their perceptions of one another, such as the view expressed by some of the journalists that some of their colleagues had become "activists" instead of professionals, and labelled each other "ZANU (PF) supporter" or "MDC supporter" (see Chapter Five).

The interaction also made the researcher realise how, in a qualitative research study such as the present one, power relations between the researcher and the research participant are always in a state of flux.

The researcher realised how, in an interview process, power is a negotiated outcome between the researcher and the research participant, and consequently bound to shift back and forth depending on the class position of the researcher and the researched and the setting. In addition, the researcher learnt that the identity of the researcher and the researched are never unitary at any one time (Day 2012). Thus, the researcher's experiences in interviewing journalists and editors (a group that wields power by virtue of their professional status and privileges) were different from his interactions with "ordinary" members of the public, who themselves rely on the press for information.

Unlike the journalists and editors who knew the researcher, none of the respondents in the category of 'citizens' knew him, thus making the climate of fear mentioned above a more salient issue. This challenge manifested itself at various levels. Firstly, the recruitment of participants became more onerous and rejections were high. In a few instances, respondents who had verbally agreed to be interviewed turned down the interview the moment the researcher requested them to sign participation and consent forms.

Another participant agreed to sign the participant and consent forms but did not want to be audio-recorded. As a result the interview did not take place as it would be difficult to capture his views. It was instructive to note that instruments that were meant to facilitate transparency and accountability in the research process became obstacles to the research process. This however, could be a subject for a separate study.

Given the fact elections were looming and the fact that the previous election (the 2008 presidential run-off) was characterised by violence fear and the perception of risk were palpable. For instance, during an interview one respondent kept on imploring the researcher to keep the information she was giving confidential and her plea for protection became louder as the interview progressed and she complained that "the questions were getting more and more political". This was in spite of the fact that, before the interview, the researcher had taken time to explain the objectives of the study and signing consent forms and participation forms guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents.These cases clearly bring to the spotlight, how certain research contexts bring to bear different dilemmas into the research process whereby the researcher ends up juggling conflicting roles in an attempt to manage the emotions of the participants as well as his own, a scenario which Day (2012, 69) refers to as "emotional labour". While the use of the interview method was motivated by the researcher's own epistemological view and the belief that authentic knowledge is that which is generated by closely interacting with the researched in their own natural settings, this did not necessarily erase the barriers between him as a researcher and his participants.

The researcher became aware that his attempts to narrow the distance between him and his research participants (by going to interview them, thus privileging them as "knowers", thereby relinquishing some of the researcher's power to speak on their behalf) did not necessarily guarantee that he had unlimited access to the information he wanted. The fact that respondents were giving information to the researcher - an outsider (and from their perspective they were not absolutely sure what the researcher would do with the information) might possibly have limited the amount of information that the researcher obtained from them, thus highlighting the fluidity of power relations in the research process, and in the process debunking the view that power is a "a possession that can be attained and used by social actors" (Day 2012, 66).

Foucault asserts that power relations are "circulatory" and "something that is intrinsically held by persons; it is the effect of discursive struggles over the realm of meaning and production of knowledge. Nor is power simply imposed from above or held by a singular source; it's distributed throughout social relationships" (cited in Day 2012, 67). That power is perceived as ever shifting, does not however, imply that it is equally distributed between the researcher and the participants in a research process. However, these reflections on the researcher's positionality and his engagement with various dilemmas and obstacles encountered during the research process cannot by itself suggest that the researcher was able to address all the challenges related to power differentials, his values, beliefs and presuppositions, nor does he wish his reflexivity to be viewed as a mere "confessional tale" (Pillow cited in Day 2012, 68) but rather an attempt to insert himself in the research process, the ultimate objective being to account for the epistemological basis upon which his interpretations are founded.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Cognizant of the fact that any research process that involves human subjects has the potential to create tension between the objectives of the research and the rights of participants, due ethical considerations were taken throughout the research process in order to ensure that no harm was caused to participants. The research was guided by five main ethical principles, namely:

- To ensure that participants clearly understood the objectives of the study and what was expected of them;
- The need to avoid harm to participants;
- To ensure the informed consent of the participants;
- To ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of participants was respected.
- To ensure that the researcher is truthful and honest in the presentation and analysis of findings and that data is not manipulated.

Ethical clearance was sought and granted by the University of Witwatersrand Ethics Committee.

The purpose and objectives of the research study, and data collection methods were clearly spelt out to the participants before the interviews started. It was also explained to them, that they had a right to withdraw from the interview at any stage of the interview if they wished to do so.

Before each interview began, participants were given an Informed Consent form and a Participant Information Sheet. The Participant Information Sheet outlined the purpose and objectives of the research, the approximate duration of the interview, what the participants were expected of, their right to withdraw from the interview at any stage if they so wished, and the promise to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity (if the latter was desired).

Participants who agreed to be interviewed were given both the Participant Information Sheet and the Informed Consent and Audio-Recording Consent form to sign. Gaining informed consent from the participants was beneficial in a way that was beyond simply fulfilling ethical requirements in the sense that participants began to show more confidence in the study and responded to the questions frankly and enthusiastically. This boosted the prospects for obtaining rich data.

Guaranteeing anonymity to participants during the data collection and reporting process boosted the confidence of the participants thereby improving the prospects for obtaining rich data. Participants were requested to choose where the interviews would be conducted, thus making sure that participants were interviewed in a place where they were more comfortable. Appropriate measures were taken to ensure that raw data would not be accessible to any other person other than the author and his supervisor. Transcripts were kept under lock and key and their electronic versions were encrypted.

In respect to the category of participants classified as ‘citizens’, all identifying features, such as names of respondents were removed and in order to weaken the link between raw data and processed data fictitious names were used to replace the real names of respondents who preferred anonymity.

This was done to ensure that respondents did not suffer any physical or psychological harm. However, respondents in the category of editors did not mind their names published, and as indicated in Chapters, Five, Six, and Seven their names are appended to their statements.

In order to ensure that the responses of participants were accurately represented in the analysis and interpretation, and to ensure that the results were not slanted, the researcher continuously cross-checked and verified what the respondents had actually said and their narratives were represented as they were. Continuously reflecting on his positionality (as discussed above) ensured that, throughout the study process, the researcher remained conscious of the possible impact of his social location, values, beliefs, perceptions, and made an effort to have these bracketed during the study process, thereby, ameliorating errors of deficiency and exuberance.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was that the very limited sample of citizens which was confined to the capital city, Harare, and the fact that participants were required to be regular readers of newspapers, thereby excluding those who were not literate enough to read newspapers, but might have had rich experiences of media reporting of election violence (such as radio and television).

The purposive sample used to select respondents and textual data meant the researcher used his discretion to select 'information rich cases', resulting in the sample being skewed towards one particular group of people, residing in a particular locality and were of a certain gender. In addition, the use of interviews to collect people's views about past experiences and events also presented a number of challenges in the sense that some respondents found it difficult to remember past events relating to specific elections.

Some events are better analyzed when they are still happening rather than after they have happened, and elections are no exception. The problem of asking people about events that happened in the past is that their context is usually lost in the narrative and the views of the respondents are likely to be influenced by current events.

As observed earlier, it was a huge challenge for participants to reconstruct events which had transpired more than a decade ago due to the time lag. The other limitation was that the study focused only on newspapers and did not include the broadcasting in the analysis, meaning that it is impossible to have a much broader insights on the discursive construction of election violence in Zimbabwe. Further, the Foucauldian discourse analysis approach applied in this thesis has been criticised for giving "too much power to the concept of discourse", thereby stripping the subject and the journalist of their agency (Hobbs 2008, 13). The Foucauldian perspective has also been accused of placing too much emphasis on the notion of discourse, to the point of being reductionist or deterministic. Such reductionism finds expression in the misplaced conception of people as "not free to think and act" on their own free will since their ideas are produced and determined by social, political and cultural contexts (discursive practices) in which they exist. Hobbs (2008) argues that Foucault's idea of discourse ignores "the material, economic and other structural factors involved in the distribution of knowledge/power, while exposing his argument of discursive "regimes of truth" to the charge of relativism" (Hall, cited in Hobbs 2008, 14). Be that as it may, the Foucauldian discursive approach remains a powerful and insightful theory for understanding meaning production in text and talk.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the epistemological position of the thesis, the research design adopted in this thesis, the sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis, demonstrating their linkage with the epistemological position of the thesis. It was demonstrated in this chapter, how social constructionism, which is the epistemological position which underpins this thesis necessitated the deployment of a qualitative design and qualitative research methods which enabled the researcher to interact with his participants and to consider the voices of these participants as legitimate forms of knowledge on the phenomenon under investigation.

It was noted that the choice of research design, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis methods adopted in this study was principally dictated by the purpose of the study which raises questions about how individuals make sense of the world. The chapter also discussed the fieldwork process, highlighting the opportunities presented by the selected data collection methods as well as the challenges encountered during the research process.

The ethical issues and dilemmas attendant upon the study and the way in which they were dealt with was also highlighted. A reflexive account highlighting the researcher's interaction with his participants and assumptions occasioned by his class position, experiences, and identity and how these assumptions, presuppositions and experiences were dealt with was given. The chapter also discussed the study's limitations, highlighting how certain methodological choices were a drawback to the research study.

The next chapter sketches the background of this thesis, illuminating the political and economic context which shaped the press and citizen discourses on election violence that is the focus of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR: NATION STATE FORMATION, ELECTIONS AND THE PRESS IN ZIMBABWE, 1980-2013: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Introduction

> *Elections do not occur in a social vacuum. They take place within specific and historical contexts. Unfolding historical and political developments directly and indirectly influence the electoral process of the country. In fact, they constitute the macro environmental contexts within which elections are conducted. Political and historical contexts define the playfield, determine the rules and play of the game as well as the policy issues that inform and underpin election campaigns. Electoral processes and practices at a given time, mirror political scenarios aground where the political climate is tense, agitated, and polarized, election campaigns have generally been marred with violence. Understanding of the politics and history of the country is therefore critical in unraveling the political behavior of election contenders (ZESN 2008, 14).*

This chapter provides the broader context in which this thesis is situated. In very expansive strokes, the chapter maps out the socio-political, economic and historical background which informs this thesis in order to give the reader a deeper understanding of the forces that have shaped discourses on electoral violence in Zimbabwe. The assumption which is informed by the above quotation is that, meanings about elections are framed through the prism of the larger context in which elections are conducted. The chapter illuminates the historical processes and events underpinning discourses about electoral violence, beginning in 1980 when the country attained independence from Britain and demonstrates how those events are implicated in current struggles over the state.

The chapter is divided into six sections. Section one is an overview of the country's colonial legacy, the struggle to liberate it and how these remain the albatross around the neck of the post-colony. Section two discusses the reconciliation policy, the socialist project and the civil war in Matabeleland. It also draws the common strands linking these events and their relevance in contemporary Zimbabwean politics. Section three examines the debate on the one-party system, the neo-liberal policies introduced in the late 1990s and how they became catalysts to the multi-layered crises at the turn of the millennium.

Section four examines the fast-track-land reform and the emergence of a viable opposition and how they relate to the crises. Section five gives an outline of the press system from the colonial era to the present, teasing out salient aspects of the press and its interface with politics and society. Section six recapitulates the key observations made in the chapter and maps out the nodal points linking the different sections. The chapter argues that the discursive construction of election violence discussed in the analytical chapters cannot be fully comprehended outside the historical antecedents and the larger socio-political and economic context in which electoral contests were performed in Zimbabwe.

4.2 Zimbabwe's Colonial Legacy: 'An Unfinishable Business'?

Zimbabwe became an independent Republic on 18 April 1980 after a protracted and bloody liberation war, known as *Chimurengas* or *Zvimurenga* (war of liberation) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011, 11). The first Chimurenga pitted the indigenous people of Zimbabwe led by famous spirit mediums, *Ambuya Nehanda* and *Sekuru Kaguvi* against the white colonialists between 1896 and 1897 and claimed 8000 lives (Chitiyo 2000, 3). The colonialists quashed the first *Chimurenga* by using asymmetrical force, brutality and torture of war prisoners and civilians (Zimbabwean Embassy in Sweden, 2009). This was followed by the second *Chimurenga,* between 1966[6] and 1979, which pitted pro-colonialist Ian Smith Rhodesian forces against anti-colonial Zimbabwean liberation guerilla forces.

The second *Chimurenga* ended in December 1979 after excruciating negotiations at the Lancaster House Constitutional Conference in Britain culminating in the April 1980 general elections which brought the country's independence.

[6]Although the Chinhoyi Battle of April 1966 marked the formal onset of the Second Chimurenga the revolution started in the early 1960s and took various forms of resistance such as protests, demonstrations and passive forms of resistance.

This *Chimurenga* was bloodier than the first and it is estimated that 50 000[7] people, mainly Africans from the rural areas died while thousands others were maimed (Chitiyo, 2000, 10).

One contentious issue that threatened to scuttle the Lancaster House negotiations was the moratorium on the land which proscribed the new government from expropriating white-owned land until after ten years. In addition, constitutional amendments during the ten year period required 100 percent majority, which was unfeasible because the same constitution reserved 20 seats for the white minority for the subsequent seven years preceding independence.

The Patriotic Front, comprising the two liberation movements, ZANU (PF) and PF ZAPU had strenuously opposed the moratorium on land acquisition arguing that the land issue was the epicenter of the liberation struggle and any compromise was a flagrant negation of the essence of the liberation struggle. They, however, reluctantly accepted the deal after being persuaded by some of their Front Line States compatriots and benefactors, some of whom, nevertheless acknowledged the duplicity of the arrangement. For instance, the then president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere commented that it would be impossible to:

> …tax Zimbabweans in order to compensate people who took it away from them through the gun. Really the British cannot have it both ways. They made this an issue and are now making vague remarks mixing rural development with the question of land compensation. The two are separate…The British paid money to Kenya. That the future government of Zimbabwe must pay compensation is a British demand and the British must promise in London to make money available (Utete, 2003, 14).

Pledges by Britain, the United States of America and other donor countries to assist in funding land reform helped to allay the fears of the Patriotic Front leaders that they would not be able to make good their promises of delivering land to their legion of land hungry masses after independence. However, Britain, the United States of America and many of the donors reneged on their promises.

[7]Statistics on the number of lives lost during the Second Chimurenga however vary from author to author. Paul Moorcraft (1990) puts the figure at "over 30 000" while Sue Onslow says the war took between 30 000 and 80 000 lives. The 50 000 figure stands closer to official accounts of the Second Chimurenga.

When the Labour Government under Tony Blair came to power in Britain in 1997 its Secretary for International Development, Claire Short delivered the message which broke the camel's back precipitating the irrevocable collapse of diplomatic relations between Zimbabwe and Britain. Short wrote to Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister declaring that:

> I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish and as you know we were colonized and not colonizers (cited in Utete 2003, 15).

Most studies on the Zimbabwean multi-faceted crisis which started at the turn of the new millennium locate the country's multi-layered crisis to its colonial legacy (external factor) and the ineptitude of its political leadership (internal factors) with differing degrees of emphasis on the apportionment of blame (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011, Bond and Manyanya, 2002, Mlambo and Raftopoulus, 2010). Gastheni-Ndlovu (2011, 64) posits that the ruling party, Zanu (PF) inherited an 'intransigent colonial settler state' whereby violence was the modus operandi.

The ZANU-ZAPU split in 1963 was so acrimonious that both parties learnt to embrace militaristic methods and violence as legitimate tools for gaining and retaining power. Makumbe (cited by Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011, 64) contends that the liberation parties tasked with ushering a democratic dispensation were forced by circumstances of the day to adopt militant and militaristic strategies epitomized by 'commandist' and regimental attitudes that did not brook any form of dissent, and the celebration of violence as a legitimate tool for achieving political control. As demonstrated in this chapter these commandist strategies would be invoked and revoked depending on the political exigencies of a power contest after even independence.

Although some scholars concede that the compromises made at the Lancaster House negotiations, the consequence of which was a 'residual economical and political power in white hands' (Bond and Manayanya 2002, 8) and several kinds of debt inherited from the colonial regime as having contributed to the crisis, they tend to apportion more blame on "exhausted nationalism", (Bond and Manyanya 2002).

(Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011, 7) argues that the Lancaster House agreement compromised Zimbabwe's 'revolutionary transition' that could have dealt with finality with the racially skewed land tenure system and unequal distribution of economic resources in a post-colonial Zimbabwe.

The incomplete transformation or the "half-way house" (Bond and Manyanya, 2002) nature of the Zimbabwean revolution returned to haunt the country at the turn of the millennium. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011, 15) argues that:

> …the crisis that engulfed Zimbabwe at the beginning of the third millennium has its deep roots in the legacies of settler colonialism and inherent limits of African nationalism. This reality has far reaching implications for the shape of Zimbabwe's nation-state project. In the first place, control over and access to land has continued to shape and influence political contestations and imaginations of freedom because 'control over land and production on itself became a crucial aim of the Southern Rhodesia administration and government'.

At independence, Zanu (PF) inherited a structurally weak state without control of a key economic resource, buffeted by economic sanctions and saddled with various types of international and domestic debt, amounting to about US$697.1 million (Bond and Manyanya, 2002). The euphoria of independence masked the reality of the new state's capacity to deal with its colonial legacy and sooner rather than later the tell-tale signs of a bifurcated state began to show. The ideological and moral debt of colonialism to the people of Zimbabwe was such that Zimbabwean tax-payers would pay double for colonial oppression through payments of loans taken to oppress them during the colonial era and repayments of the same after independence and the rise of neo-liberalism (Bond and Manyanya 2002, 9). The imposition of neo-liberalism after independence also meant that the colonialists remained in control and the revolution suffocated.

4.3 Reconciliation without Justice, the Socialist Experiment and *Gukurahundi*

In the preceding section it was pointed out how compromises made at the Lancaster House negotiations postponed the resolution of the national question. These compromises were further underpinned by Robert Mugabe, a famed Marxist who became the executive Prime-Minister in the coalition government reconciliation policy. There would be neither retribution nor radical policies that would shake the edifice of the colonial structure.

Announcing the reconciliation policy Mugabe said:

> If yesterday I fought you as an enemy today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2003, 34).

Although Mugabe's magnanimity earned him international accolades as a mature states-man (Ingham-Thorpe, 1997, 187) and Zimbabwe was hailed as a beacon of reconciliation politics the moods of bitterness among some sections of the society were palpable. Despite Zanu (PF)'s socialist rhetoric the economy remained in the hands of the white minority enjoying government protection through "legitimized private accumulation" as opposed to government intervention (Raftopoulos 2004, 4). The country received substantial donor support from Western countries as recognition of its racial tolerance (Scarnecchia n.d., 90) and was feted as a model of transition in a region where global capitalist interests were ingrained.

Some scholars argue that Zimbabwe's reconciliation policy was flawed in that it placed too much emphasis on reconciliation between blacks and whites at the expense of reconciliation between blacks and blacks, given that the two liberation movements, ZANU (PF) and PF ZAPU had a history of mutual-suspicion (Institute for Electoral Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2003, 34) epitomized by rancorous cleavages and "erratic attempts to forge alliances and umbrella organisations" (Sylvester, 1990, 378).

The two main ethnic groups from which these two political parties drew their support, i.e. Shona and Ndebele also had a history of implacable conflicts dating back to the colonial period, through the liberation struggle in the 1960s and most recently during the *Gukurahundi*[8] period in the 1980s (Chitiyo 2000). Others have criticized the reconciliation policy for accentuating forgiveness and forgetting at the expense of justice, "truth telling, confession, repentance" (Fisher 2010, 50). Fisher (2010) argues that with the reconciliation policy, whites did not have to do anything in reciprocation.

In the absence of any form of apology, confession or "expression of any genuine regret" (Fisher 2010, 49) the conditions necessary for genuine and lasting reconciliation did not exist. The so-called "new order" was viewed by others as change without change.

[8] *Gukurahundi* was a violent state sponsored military operation in the mainly Ndebele speaking provinces of Midlands and Matabeleland which was primarily targeting dissidents and civilians who supported the then major opposition party, ZAPU. The violent nature of the operation resulted in widespread resentment of the ruling ZANU (PF) party.

Sylvester (1990, 381) argues that Zanu (PF), like Ian Smith and Muzorewa had imbibed the myth that whites were "indispensable to the economy" and deserved more protection in order to safeguard "standards", thereby fostering a "false sense of economic security" among the white community (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2003, 37).

There was no explicit acknowledgement and acceptance of past wrongs by anybody. The persistence of economic inequalities between the blacks and whites in the midst of increasing destitution and penury among those who bore the brunt of the liberation war such as the war veterans engendered destructive social relations and the failure by the socialist policy to deliver a nirvana produced a crisis of expectations.

The government's ferocious military operation to crush the dissidents in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, (**see Appendix 2**) which happened to be PF-Zapu strongholds and mainly populated by Ndebele-speaking people beginning 1981, has been cited as an example of the shortcomings of the reconciliation policy. Dubbed *Gukurahundi*, (the rain that washes away the chaff before the spring rains (Deller 2009, 1) the operation resulted in the death of about 20 000[4] civilians (CCJP cited in Vambe 2012, 76) and the maiming and disappearance of thousands others. However, much of what happened during this era did not receive much local and international media attention, hence the silence around *Gukurahundi*.

The deployment of the 5th Brigade to quell the dissident menace did not decrease the people of the region's support for ZAPU. If anything it increased their resentment of the ZANU (PF) government because they saw *Gukurahundi* not as a "war against dissidents, but against the Ndebele and ZAPU" (CCJP 1999, 13). The failure to implement a genuine "truth recovery and truth disclosure" process (*News Day*, 2010) and national healing meant these wounds have remained unhealed. Eppel (2004, 43) argues that Zimbabweans have avoided facing the truth by side-stepping the wrongs of the past.

[4]The number of civilians killed during the Gukurahundi military campaign however, differs from writer to writer. For example, Chitiyo (2000, 6) puts the estimate at 6000, Rukuni (2007, 1) says nearly 30000 civilians were killed. Deller, 2009, 1) put the estimate of civilians killed during the *Gukurahundi* at between 5000-7000). Most recently an MDC high ranking official, Eddie Cross claimed that about 80 000 people were killed during the *Gukurahundi* (see NewZimbabwe.com2014). The figure that is widely quoted by the popular press is 20 000 (see also Vambe, 2012, Newsday 2010).

Participants at a workshop to discuss a report by the Human Rights NGO Forum on the *Gukurahundi* massacres in 2010 urged truthful disclosure and a categorical apology to the people of Matabeleland as a prerequisite for genuine reconciliation.

> There is no other way to reconcile the region of Matabeleland with the rest of the country if the truth of what happened during Gukurahundi is not known. Even for an apology to be accepted it must be clear what is being apologized for (News Day, 2010).

This clearly shows the extent to which the events around *Gukurahundi* sowed the seeds of bitterness, suspicion, and mistrust regarding the Zanu (PF) government. ZANU (PF)'s dismal electoral performance in the Matabeleland region is testament to this mistrust.

Scholars who critique Zimbabwe's reconciliation policy, however, tend to be selective in their analysis (Ingham-Thorpe 1997; Eppel 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012) in that, while acknowledging the flaws of the reconciliation policy they accentuate such flaws in relation to the most recent events such as *Gukurahundi* while glossing over the need for the same in relation to colonial injustices, as if to encourage the truncation and decapitation of history or to sanctify the colonial regime.

The case for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission modeled along the lines of the one instituted in South Africa in the early 1990s could be more convincing if it were made in relation to both the wrongs of colonialism and any other human rights violations, be they historical or contemporary. These scholars also evade questions as to whether reconciliation was genuinely embraced or spurned by its beneficiaries and what evidence there was to demonstrate acceptance or disdain of the policy.

4.4 The One-Party State Debate, ESAP and the Economic Downturn

Negotiations between ZANU (PF) and PF ZAPU culminated in the signing of a unity deal, the Unity Accord on December 22 1987 and the two parties merged into one party still called ZANU (PF). The civil war in Matabeleland ceased and PF ZAPU leader, Joshua Nkomo became the second vice-President of the country. ZANU (PF)'s dream of a one-party state almost became a reality (Shaw 1986).

The one-party state idea was reaffirmed in the party's 1985 election manifesto thereby spelling the end of the "mock pluralism" (Sylvester, 1986, 375) which had characterized the first years of independence.

When the 20 seats reserved for the whites were abolished through a constitutional amendment in 1987, the rest of the political parties became more like pretenders to the throne. Zanu (PF) mounted its arguments for the one party-state on several planks. They argued that the one party state system resonated with African customary practices whereby there is one chief and decisions are arrived at by consensus rather than by decree (Shaw, 1986, 378). The ruling party also justified the need for a one party system arguing that the majority of Zimbabweans had voted for it. Moreover, it was argued that the multiparty system was divisive and undermined the imperative for unity and nation-building, and accusations leveled against most opposition parties in Africa that they are fronts for Western imperialist interests were used to bolster this view (Shaw 1986, 379).

A sudden turn of events dealt a heavy blow to Zanu (PF)'s one-party state project when Edgar Tekere, the party's firebrand former Secretary General and Chairman of the party's Manicaland province who had been expelled from the party formed a break-away political party, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) in April 1989. Earlier, the report of a scandal involving government ministers who illegally bought and sold motor vehicles from the sole car manufacturing plant, Willowvale Mazda Motor Industry caused an uproar (Raftopoulos, 1992, Mukasa, 2003), prompting President Mugabe to set up the a commission to investigate the scandal.

Geoff Nyarota, the editor of state-owned daily newspaper, *The Chronicle* who had unearthed the scandal, commonly known as the "Willowgate scandal" was however, moved to a redundant position "upstairs" (Mukasa, 2003), an indication that the government was not fully committed to fighting corruption.

The Willowgate scandal was preceded by demonstrations by University of Zimbabwe students who were protesting against what they perceived as growing corruption in the government and the ruling party.

The students took to the streets again in 1989 after members of their Students Representative Council (SRC) were detained by the police. The then Secretary General of Trade Unions (ZCTU), which had been a strong ally of government, Morgan Tsvangirai was detained by the police for issuing a solidarity message with the students and criticizing the police's highhandedness in handling the student demonstration (Raftopoulos, 1992).

Between April and June 1990 a battery of national strikes by public service workers was the clearest indication that things were falling apart and the centre could no longer hold. ZUM sought to capitalise on this groundswell of disenchantment among the urban working class in the context of a growing social gap between the working class and the ruling elite (Sachikonye, 1989, 119). Feeding on disillusionment, ZUM pivoted its campaign manifesto on an "anti-corruption" and "anti-one party-state" platform in the 1990 elections.

Although ZUM dismally lost the 1990 elections, winning only two seats, translating to 18% of the popular vote in an election where the First-Past The-Post (FPTP)[9] electoral system was used (Sithole and Makumbe 1997, 128) it broke the myths about ZANU (PF) and Mugabe's invincibility, forcing the party to shelve its one-party state project (Sithole 1993, 38). ZUM gave hope to the multitude of urban working class people reeling from (ESAP) which the government had introduced in 1991 at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Faced with a ballooning budget deficit and a growing Balance of Payments (BOP) deficit emanating from the poor performance of exports, Zanu (PF) faced the dilemma of remaining wedded to its socialist policies or embracing neo-liberalism. It chose the latter path, but the consequences were disastrous. The official spin was that ESAP was the panacea for the country's economic malaise, but just like an efficient pill it would be bitter to swallow but in the end heal the economy.

[9] This is a winner-take all system whereby political parties field candidates in every constituency and the candidates who gets the highest votes wins as opposed to proportional representation system where seats are allocated according to the total number of votes garnered by candidates.

Although the government urged the poor to tighten their belts, the opulence among the ruling elite spoke volumes about its hypocrisy. The Willowgate scandal was just but one prelude to the acquisitive propensity of the *nouveau-riche.* The austerity measures called for under ESAP; the retrenchments, the removal of subsidies and a host of cost-cutting measures in the social services sector resulted in the working class sinking deeper into abject poverty.

When Zimbabwe's government forged an unholy alliance with the business sector, the workers became alienated, resulting in the labour body ZCTU breaking ranks with the government. The drought of 1992 could not have come at a worse time. The result was acute food shortages and inflation, sparking wild-cat food riots in 1993. As the economic hardships intensified the grievances and demands of the workers' transcended the realm of bread and butter issues as they began to demand "accountability", good "governance" and "democracy" from the ruling elite. The result was the formation, in 1998, of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), a coalition of civic bodies, labour, intellectuals, churches and students calling for constitutional reforms to replace the Lancaster House constitution (Bratton and Masunungure, 2011).

The NCA was chaired by Morgan Tsvangirai, who was still the Secretary General of the ZCTU, later becoming the President of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Government responded to the demands for constitutional reforms by setting up its own constitutional body, the Constitutional Commission (CC) in order to undercut the NCA.

Meanwhile, war veterans of the 1970s liberation war, who all along had been neglected by the government confronted the government in 1997 protesting against the abuse of the War Victims Compensation Fund (WVCF) which had been set up in the late 1990s to cater for the welfare of war veterans injured during the war. Subsequent demonstrations by the Zimbabwe National War Veterans Association (ZNWVA) headed by the Polish-trained medical doctor Chenjerai "Hitler" Hunzvi became riotous and in 1997 President Mugabe was heckled while delivering a speech at the National Heroes Acre.

Due to pressure, the government acquiesced to the demands of the war veterans and agreed to pay each of the 50 000 members of the ZNWVA a one-off payment of Z$50 000[5] and a monthly pension of Z$2000[6], the total of which amounted to an unbudgeted Z$4.5 billion (Bratton and Masunungure 2011). The Zimbabwean dollar crushed to an all-time low on 20 November 1997, popularly commonly referred to as "Black Friday". This triggered a series of convulsions in the economy resulting in a pattern of violent politics in a grueling "battle for the state" (Onslow 2011, 2) symptomatic of the crisis of nation-state project" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011, 7).

Most scholars on the Zimbabwean crisis place undue emphasis on the unbudgeted cash payouts and the military intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DCR) for precipitating the then crisis in Zimbabwe while downplaying the machinations of external forces (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003; Bond and Manyanya, 2011; Bratton and Masunugure 2011;Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011 Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012). Moyo and Yeros (2007) disagree with this view, pointing out that, although the Zimbabwean state had always been in a delicate position overt signs of distress started showing in 1997 after government suspended ESAP and went on to list 1471 white owned commercial farms for expropriation.

The IMF and the World Bank delayed and later withdrew funding and some bilateral and multilateral funding arrangements collapsed and the local currency took a battering (Moyo and Yeros, 2007). Gowans (2008, 3) reasons that Mugabe's government's pursuit of black nationalist interests rattled the interests of Western banks, corporations and white settlers who are of European origin, prompting the IMF, the World Bank and Western donor countries to cut development aid and impose sanctions. The US specifically passed a law, the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) in 2001 to block the country's access to international credit. Stone (2007, 3) concurs, arguing that the Zimbabwean crisis has its roots in the geo-political conflict "spurred on by non-conformity of Zimbabwe's government with existing U.S., U.K. and IMF dictates".

[5]Equivalent to USD 8000 at the time

[6]Equivalent to USD200

He adds that the "considerable interference in Zimbabwe's internal politics to a large degree explains the measures undertaken by the government" (Stone 2007, 3).

The erosion of ZANU (PF)'s hegemony and its adoption of predatory tactics, what Moyo and Yeros (2007) refer to as "radicalization" became more poignant after the adoption of neoliberal policies. Although ESAP had been abandoned in 1997 the public acknowledgement of its adverse effects came much later. Addressing a gathering at the National Heroes Acre on 15 October 2001 President Mugabe pronounced ESAP dead and buried. He said "Engough is Engough… ESAP is no more. We can bury it here" (*The Zimbabwe Independent,* 2002). Earlier, Mugabe had told delegates of the Special National Congress in December that:

> The hardships we endure today arise from the programme of adjustment to which we acquiesced at the beginning of this decade, which have had the terrible effect of simply wiping off the phenomenal social gains we had made during the first decade of our independence. Presently, many children are out of school; support for our health institutions can no longer serve our people; our social safety nets are largely dismantled and the laws that used to protect our workers against arbitrary retrenchments are, by and large repealed. Our people suffer and blame the Party and Government for it (Mugabe 2001, 117).

Scholars who argue that the erosion of ZANU (PF) hegemony deepened after the government lost the crucial referendum vote in February 2000 are quite correct but they fall short in accounting for the causes of the ruling party's popularity, preferring to blame everything on ZANU (PF)'s allergy to good governance and inherent deficit in human rights. Mugabe blames ESAP for his party's dwindling political fortunes stating that

> We adjusted the economy for external interests, which is why our people have nothing to show, ten years into the adjustment; which is why this economy has been declaring monthly dividends to foreigners year in year out, indeed why local white companies have been notching profits at the expense of their workforce. The way forward is to adjust the economy for real ownership and control by indigenous Zimbabweans.

Some of ZANU (PF)'s fiercest critics concede that:

> Whatever the many other flaws of Robert Mugabe and Zanu (PF), the first post-independence government was driven into a *cul-de-sac* by the forces of neo-liberalism, both local and global. Political degeneration was the next logical process, once it became evident around 1997 that ESAP was incapable of lifting Zimbabwe from the chronic dependency and had indeed greatly exacerbated underdevelopment (Bond and Manyanya (2011, 48)

This shows that there are competing narratives about Zimbabwe's quagmire. The truth, however, lies somewhere in-between these competing narratives.

4.5 The Third *Chimurenga*, Opposition Politics and Manifestations of Crises

It is perhaps trite to state that Zimbabwe's fast-track land reform has become synonymous with the Zimbabwean crisis and vice-versa (Chari 2010) the real basis for the assumption that the crisis began in 2000. Lush and Kupe (2005, 5) argue that the words "crisis" and "Zimbabwe" are rarely found apart these days with Zimbabwe becoming the 'poster boy' of anarchy and crisis. Chuma (2005, 2) argues that there is a "crisis of perspective regarding Zimbabwe's crisis and the terrain of debate about the Zimbabwean crisis is bifurcated".

It could be argued that the crisis predates the referendum, but the referendum was the rod that torched the powder keg. After the government formed its Constitutional Commission the NCA cried foul arguing that it preferred a "people driven" constitutional reform process and not one championed by the government.

The NCA therefore, campaigned for a NO vote. ZANU (PF) suffered its first electoral defeat since independence in a referendum held in February 2000. A few months back the MDC had been formed and drew the core members of its leadership from the ZCTU and the NCA and was led by Morgan Tsvangirai, who by the time of the referendum wore three hats, as President of the MDC, Secretary General of the NCA and Secretary General of the ZCTU.

The electoral humiliation suffered by the government was followed by a raft of measures which have been described by some critics as acts of vengeance and vindictiveness. One of these was the retrieval from the rejected constitutional draft, of a clause empowering the government to compulsorily acquire land without compensation and incorporating it into the Lancaster House constitution (Amendment Number 16, Act/5/2000) thus, signaling the beginning of a fast-track land reform programme which became popularly known as The *Third Chimurenga* or *Jambanja*.

Official discourse lavishes the amendment and The *Third Chimurenga* as the final phase of liberation, which is economic liberation. The state-daily newspaper, *The Herald* portrayed the event thus:

> Zimbabwe yesterday took a giant leap towards correcting the historical imbalances in land ownership when Parliament passed a Bill which gives government the power to compulsorily acquire land for resettlement without compensation. The MPs (who voted in favour of the law) who included vice-Presidents Muzenda and Msika, immediately broke into the liberation war song "Zimbabwe Ndeyeropa (Zimbabwe was born of the blood shed during the liberation war) soon after the bill was passed as British High Commission officials trooped out of the Speaker's Gallery. Some MPs could not contain their joy and swayed to the rhythm of the song, while others clapped and banged benches in ecstasy (cited in Willems 2004, 167).

The joyous mood in parliament sharply contrasted the sorrowful mood and bitterness which enveloped the white commercial farming community. The country had opened a new political chapter epitomized by polarisation and a political culture of intolerance. The months to follow witnessed widespread and uncoordinated occupations of white commercial farms characterized by violence and mayhem.

As the June 2000 elections approached, the farm occupations became more violent, resulting in deaths and political talk became more virulent. ZANU (PF) upped the tempo on its rhetoric about *Hondo Yeminda* (war over land) and ran its election campaign with the slogan "Land is the Economy; The Economy is Land". Whites who had previously shown little enthusiasm in political activities prior to the referendum came out in large numbers to vote for the MDC and were at one point filmed by CNN before the 2000 signing cheques for the opposition leader, Tsvangirai.

The land reform programme gathered momentum after the elections, which Zanu (PF) won narrowly (winning 62 of the contested seats while MDC won 57 seats). The elections were, however, marred by violence. As the farm occupations spread throughout the country diplomatic relations between Zimbabwe and Western countries, principally the United Kingdom and the USA plummeted to historic lows prompting the EU and the USA to impose travel bans on the Zanu (PF) leadership.

Disruptions in the farming sector resulted in acute food shortages and unprecedented inflation. The farm occupations became the terrain for contending discourses. While the opposition branded the farm occupations "chaotic" acts of "barbarism" ZANU (PF) described them as "peaceful demonstrations".

Although the ZANU (PF) line was drowned by widespread local and international condemnation, there are some who feel violence was inevitable, arguing that "the violation of property rights" was "by all objective considerations" to address the problem given the failure of the willing buyer-willing seller and some credit schemes for over decades (Bond and Manyanya 2002, 73).

On the one hand, critics of land reform ignore the necessity to redress historical imbalances and the negative impact of sanctions on the economy (Ahmed 2002, 5). On the other hand, sympathizers of the land reform are blind to the plethora of the programme's shortcomings, some of which are documented by government appointed commissions such as the Utete Commission (2003). These include lack of productivity on some of the farms, multiple farm ownerships, violence and the haphazard manner in which land was allocated. It cannot be denied that an economy pivoted on the agricultural sector such as Zimbabwe's would suffer from the deleterious effects of farm occupations, the ripple effects of which were far reaching (Mlambo and Raftopoulos 2010, 3). However, the impact of other factors like the sanctions imposed by Western countries cannot be discounted. Government's controversial clean-up operation, after winning the 31 March 2005 election targeting "illegal activities, criminals, touts, unlicensed business and other undesirable elements" made worse an already untenable political and economic situation. Code named *Operation Murambatsvina* (Operation drive out Filth) also known as "Operation Restore Order" or "Operation Tsunami" on account of the speed with which the operation was executed resulted in the displacement of about 700 000 and a further 2.4 million were affected in various ways (Tibaijuka 2005, 7).

The humanitarian consequences of the operation were telling as it was indiscriminate and haphazard (Tibaijuka 2005). Critics of the clean-up operation argue it was meant to punish urban dwellers for overwhelmingly voting the MDC in the 2005 elections (Moore 2007; Mlambo and Raftopoulos, 2010). Others assert that it was meant to forestall a looming "Orange Revolution" subsequent to the election (Mhiripiri 2005, 151).

Mahoso (2005, 157) argues that the clean-up operation was just a routine event which should not have been turned into the global spectacle that it became (Mahoso 2005, 157). Mahoso argues that the moral condemnation of Operation *Murambatsvina* should be viewed within the context of discourses of globalization, whereby powerful nations such as the United States and Britain seek to impose their values on economically weak countries like Zimbabwe by mobilizing 'international community' for military intervention (Mahoso 2005).

Discourses around *Operation Murambatsvina* illustrate how toxic politics played host to moods of mistrust, intolerance and acrimony. That its successor, "Operation *Garikai*/Operation *Hlalani Kuhle*), a programme for building houses for people who had been affected by Operation Murambatsvina was received with much skepticism, if not cynicism by the general public is instructive of the level of mistrust and ill-feeling towards the state at the time.

As the economy took a tailspin social services such as education and health collapsed forcing thousands to emigrate in search of greener pastures in neighbouring countries, Europe, Australia and the United States of America (Mlambo and Raftopoulos 2010, 4). By 2007 inflation was in percentages of hundreds of millions while the national currency had become worthless. Per-capita GDP fell to $200 from about $900 in 1990 and about 80% of the population was reported to be living on less than $2 a day (Mlambo & Raftopoulos 2010, 4).

As the harmonized elections of March 2008 loomed, there were several media reports of a government clampdown on university students who were demanding "better service delivery" and for failing to deal with the socio-economic problems ravaging the country (Moore and Raftopoulos 2012, 252).

Before that, an unauthorised "prayer meeting" by civil society organizations in March 2007 had been violently quashed by the police, resulting in the death of an MDC activist and the injury of several others, including Morgan Tsvangirai, who suffered a deep cut on his head. The incident attracted unprecedented global media attention and Western countries led by Britain and the United States of America, tried to mobilize the international community to support military intervention against Zimbabwe.

Although there was relative calm before the March 29 harmonised elections the semblance of peace evaporated after the elections. Zanu (PF) lost its parliamentary majority to the MDC for the first time and the incumbent, President Robert Mugabe was defeated by MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai, who garnered 48% of the popular vote against Mugabe's 42% but the presidential results were embargoed for five weeks (Makumbe 2008).

Although Tsvangirai won the race he fell short of the 50% plus 1 vote prescribed by a constitutional amendment effected shortly before the March 2008 harmonised elections thereby necessitating a presidential run-off within 90 days. The presidential run-off was eventually held on 27 June after three months of bloody campaigns in which hundreds of opposition supporters (and a handful of ruling party supporters as well) died, homes burnt and thousands displaced.

Mugabe won the presidential run-off after Tsvangirai had pulled out a few days before the election citing violence against his supporters. Election observers were unanimous in their pronouncement of the election as neither free nor fair. There is unanimity among scholars that the 27 June presidential run-off was the most violent election in the history of Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012; Chitando 2010; Masunugure 2009, Moyse 2009; Makumbe 2009). As a result, Zanu (PF) faced a legitimacy crisis forcing the party to negotiate with the opposition under a SADC mediated deal in order to secure a lasting solution to the festering economic and political situation.

After months of bickering and haggling a government of national Unity (GNU) comprising Zanu (PF), the MDC faction led by Morgan Tsvangirai and the smaller faction led by Arthur Mutambara was formed in September 2008. However, due to disagreements over ministerial portfolios the GNU could not be implemented until February 2009.

A raft of economic reforms were introduced by the coalition government, one of which was the formal abolition of the Zimbabwean dollar and replacing it with a multi-currency regime resulting in inflation dropping to a single digit. On the political front political violence dropped significantly but the mutual suspicion between the coalition partners remained.

Some outstanding issues relating to the key appointments continued to dog the GNU until its tenure expired after which elections were held on 31 July 2013. ZANU (PF) won the elections garnering a two thirds majority and Mugabe whitewashed Tsvangirai after obtaining 73% of the popular vote. Although the 2013 hramonised elections were given a clean bill by African election observers, the MDC cried foul alleging that the elections had been rigged. Western countries, notably Britain, the European Union, and the USA pronounced the elections neither free nor fair.

4.6 Elections in Zimbabwe: A Source of Conflict or Dispute Resolution?

Zimbabwe has regularly and consistently held elections since independence in 1980 but these elections have been a source of apprehension, tensions and moods of bitterness (Mlambo 2005, Mlambo 2006) rather than a mechanism for dispute resolution (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012). The transitional elections which ushered the country into independence were supervised by the former colonial power, Britain, using the Lancaster House Constitution. They were the first and last elections to be run under the Proportional Representation (PR) system (Sithole and Makumbe 1997; Gregory 1980; Kriger 2005; Sachikonye 2004). All subsequent elections were held using the Single Member District (SMD) or the First-Past-the Post (FPTP) system. Nine political parties took part in the 1980 elections but only three won seats; namely Zanu (PF) (57 seats), PF-Zapu (20 seats) and UANC (3 seats). A 5% threshold was used to allocate seats in the country's eight provinces.

Zanu (PF)'s emphatic victory helped engender the myth that it was invincible and the only "authentic liberation movement" (Sylvester, 1986, 246). Zanu (PF)'s triumphalist posture played host to exclusivist discourses which justified violence against opponents and opposition supporters were likened to weeds which needed to be uprooted from the Zanu (PF) field (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012, 8).

The then Prime Minister Robert Mugabe is also alleged to have urged his supporters to "strike the bushes in the field with your clubs" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012, 8) a message which was interpreted to mean that opposition supporters should be attacked. Pre-and post-election violence left society more polarized.

Five political parties participated in the 1990 elections in which a new kid on the block; ZUM was the main opposition amid speculation that the country would become a one-party state after the elections (Sithole and Makumbe 1997, 128). The presidential race was a "bitterly contested struggle" (Sachikonye 1990, 92) between the Robert Mugabe and Edgar Tekere. Zanu (PF) won 117 of the 120 contested seats, constituting 81% of the popular vote. ZUM only won two seats, representing 18% of the vote, a percentage which would have translated to 20 seats had the Proportional Representation (PR) system been used (Sithole and Makumbe 1997, 128). Mugabe also garnered 83% of the total valid votes compared to Tekere's tally of 18% of the votes (Sithole and Makumbe 199,129). Election issues revolved around the future of democracy, the land question, the state of the economy and the issue of unemployment, housing and transport (Sachikonye 1990, 93).

While Zanu (PF) espoused a socialist ideology based on a one-party system ZUM, rejected Marxism-Leninism in favour of a mixed economy in which the private sector and the state co-existed. It was, however, on the one-party state issue that the two sharply differed. Like previous elections, ethnicity manifested itself in that, Zanu (PF) and PF Zapu agreed not to field Shona candidates in Ndebele speaking constituencies and vice-versa (Sithole and Makumbe, 1997, 128) and ZUM's two seats were won in Tekere's home province, Manicaland. Ndabaningi Sithole's solitary seat again came from Chipinge, Sithole's home district. As a result of disillusionment about unfulfilled expectations in the post-independence period voter turnout dropped from 84% in the 1990 elections to 54% in the 1985 elections.

In the wake of the Unity Accord with PF Zapu, Zanu (PF) was preaching unity their election campaign message sought to portray Zanu (PF) and PF Zapu as equal partners unified by a common history of the liberation struggle (Sylvester 1990, 387). Beneath this veneer of unity, the election campaign itself spoke volumes of political cleavages particularly in relation to the opposition ZUM which was portrayed as an enemy.

Such enemies were either disgruntled elements of the ruling party who had lost positions in which they totally failed to perform, *lumpen* proletariat elements, or diehard Rhodesians. ZUM, which had formed an alliance with the dying Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe (CAZ) was described as a "front of white settler interests" (Ndlovu-Gatstheni 2012, 8) suggesting that it was a party of sellouts.

Voting for ZUM was equated with death through AIDS or a car accident (Sylvester 1990, 394) thereby prompting some critics to describe the 1990 elections as "dirty", "trashy" and pregnant with threats and promises, accusations and inflammatory messages, innuendos, mudslinging and crude language which was intimidatory (Sylvester 1990, 394). Verbal and textual violence morphed into physical violence the climax of which was the shooting and wounding of ZUM candidate for Gweru and prominent businessman, Patrick Kombayi who dared to challenge the then Vice-President, Simon Muzenda (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012 8).

The 1995 election was the first election to be boycotted by some political parties claiming that the political terrain was skewed in favour of the ruling party, particularly in relation to access to the media, access to funding and excessive presidential powers (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012, 8). The only opposition parties to participate in the election were Forum Party of Zimbabwe led by former Chief Justice Enock Dumbutshena and Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole's Zanu Ndonga.

The number of independent candidates increased from twelve in 1990 to twenty-nine in the 1995 election. One of these, Margret Dongo, a war veteran of the 1970s liberation struggle, and a former Zanu (PF) Member of Parliament, won against her former party in the high density suburb of Sunningdale, in the capital city, Harare (**see Appendix 2.1**). Sithole and Makumbe (1997) argue that the phenomenon of independent candidates was an indication of the gradual decline of elite cohesion within Zanu (PF), suggesting that a viable opposition was likely to emerge from a splinter group within the ruling party. Such an opposition never materialized though and as mentioned earlier the most formidable opposition to emerge since independence, the MDC led by Morgan Tsvangirai was a coalescence of civil society groups, labour, intellectuals, students, industrialists and white commercial farmers, whose grievances converged around the poor performance of the economy and misgivings about the electoral system (Sachikonye2003).

Against this backdrop, the 1996 presidential election was a *fait accompli* as most opposition parties boycotted the plebiscite raising the same issues relating to the uneven electoral field (Sithole and Makumbe 1997).

Some scholars have attributed Zanu (PF)'s continued dominance to among other factors, the use and abuse of state institutions to clampdown on the opposition and inherent weaknesses in the opposition (Sylvester 1990). Through its *Gukurahundi* policy, which was an "undisguised, intolerant, commandist and deliberately violent policy" aimed at annihilating its opponents (Sithole and Makumbe 1997, 133) Zanu (PF) was able to render the opposition impotent. In addition, Zanu (PF) was able to construct a Pan-African and anti-colonial narrative that resonates with the common man on the ground. In this vein, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011, 3) notes that Zanu (PF) has been able to project itself as a "messiah" party or the vanguard party that liberated the masses from the clutches of colonialism. As Onslow (2011, 5) puts it, the dominant narrative has been that Zanu (PF) was the sole champion of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe- the reason why it has been under sustained attack from imperialist forces.

The ruling party has effectively used the European Union (EU) sanctions imposed on the country after the 2002 presidential elections to explain away the country's economic hardships experienced in the country contrary to the party's detractors, who attribute this to the ruling party's 'inept' economic policies (Onslow, 2011). Furthermore, the MDC's cozy relationship and with Western donors and its 'unholy alliance' with white commercial farmers and capitalists has significantly alienated some sections of the Zimbabwean population who view the party as a 'Trojan Horse" of neo-colonialists (Gowans, 2008). As a consequence the view that the MDC is a "sellout" party has gained traction among some sections of the electorate courtesy, of the state media which often repeats the refrain with reckless abandon. However, some scholars attribute Zanu (PF)'s continued dominance in Zimbabwean electoral politics more to the use of violence than on perceived shortfalls and weaknesses of the opposition.

Kriger (2005, 1) argues that Zanu (PF) would rely on more or less the same strategies to win elections held after 2000, although the context, the issues at hand and the nature of the opposition might have differed remarkably.

Most studies on elections in Zimbabwe suggest that election violence has been the exclusive monopoly of Zanu (PF) or at least attribute disproportionate blame to the dominant party (Ndlovu-Gatsheni; 2012, Kriger 2005, Smiles 2003; Sithole 1993, Sachikonye 1990). This view has been challenged by some scholars, not least because it portrays the ruling party as a monster and opposition parties as saints. In the case of Zimbabwe, there is evidence to suggest that minor parties are not always innocent victims. This is true in relation to the 1990 elections as is with subsequent elections. Gregory (1980, 12) argues that the culpability of other parties such as the Rhodesian forces in acts of violence was often overlooked during the 1980 elections resulting in the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG), the main election observer group in the election to point out that the one sided picture portrayed by the authorities was misleading and "must be corrected"

In 1990 ZUM mounted a vigorous campaign in urban centres spraying graffiti on postal boxes and bus stops, some of them with provocative aggressive messages such as "Down with Zim Dictatorship"(Sylvester 1990, 394). ZUM had threatened that "if Zanu (PF) rigged the elections Mugabe would go ahead and form the next government, but Zanu (PF) would be out after 12 months, so it was up to Zanu (PF) either to get out freely or get out the painful way" (Sylvester 1990, 395). This threat bears resemblance to one made by the opposition MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai a few months after the 2000 parliamentary elections when he addressed a gathering at the first anniversary held at Rufaro stadium. Tsvangirai is reported to have threatened President Mugabe saying:

> What we would like to tell Mugabe today is that please go peacefully. If you don't want to go peacefully we will remove you violently. The country cannot wait a day longer than necessary (*BBC News*, 30 September 2000).

While Tekere's statements were interpreted as hinting at a coup, Tsvangirai's statements were taken to mean an unconstitutional removal of an elected government. Although the opposition may not have the wherewithal to engage in the level of violence as the state, it is certainly not immune to the language of violence.

4.7 The Press Situation Since 1980

Zimbabwe's press owes its history to the country's colonial era beginning with the establishment of *The Herald* in 1892 and the Bulawayo Chronicle in 1894 by the South African based Argus Printing and Publishing Company. Before that William Fairbridge, a South African born columnist of the Cape Argus had kept the settler community in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) informed through a cyclostyled pamphlet called *The Mashonaland and Zambezia Times* which became *The Herald* in 1892 (Mararike 1998, 213). Its aim was "to advance to the fullest" the agricultural interests of the owners of the newspapers (Gale cited in Mararike 1998, 213). *The Chronicle* just like *The Herald*, sought to "promote…the rule and the success of the wonderful organisation born of Mr Cecil Rhodes…" (Gale 1962, 25). The two newspapers, therefore, championed the interests of their owners and they were not apologetic about it. At independence in 1980, the Argus Group, the owners of *The Herald* and *The Chronicle* were acquired by the Zanu (PF) government using a grant provided by the Nigerian government and the Rhodesian Printing Company which had been formed in 1927 was renamed Zimpapers Pvt. Limited in 1980. The Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT), a trustee company was set up in 1980 to provide a buffer between the government and the newspapers. The ZMMT offered some protection to the newspapers against direct government control and ensured that there was a degree of editorial independence (Article 19/MISA Zimbabwe 2004, 13).

The ZMMT was, however, dissolved in 2000 when Professor Jonathan Moyo became the Minister of Information and Publicity, and Zimpapers, the Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency (now New ZIANA) and the Community Newspapers Group (CNG) came under the direct control of boards appointed by the minister (Article 19/MISA Zimbabwe 2004, 13). Although government through the ZMMT was the dominant player in the press market, the press was at that time fairly diversified, comprising of a blossoming privately-owned press and state-owned newspapers. The economy and the press remained in the hands of the white minority despite the party's socialist rhetoric, thus mirroring Zanu (PF)'s ambiguous political character (Saunders 1991, 24).

During the first decade government did not have a codified media policy but the press policy was contained in "statements of intention" such as "The Democratization of the Media" document which was essentially broad references to the government's intention to indigenise the media (Saunders 1991, 48). Due to the vagueness of the press policy and lack of direct interference the press of the country flourished reaching its peak during the second decade of independence, commonly referred to as "the golden decade" of the press in Zimbabwe.

Buoyed by the relatively tolerant political climate of the 1990s and a liberalised economy during the ESAP period, a coterie of privately-owned newspapers was established (Saunders 1991; Ronning and Kupe 2000). These include *The Daily Gazette* (1991) *The Sunday Gazette* (1992) *The Zimbabwe Independent* (1996), *The Standard* (1997), and *The Zimbabwe Mirror* (1997). The first two were owned by Elias Rusike, a former Chief Executive Officer of Zimpapers and owner of the financial weekly, *The Financial Gazette*.

The *Daily Gazette* was the first privately-owned newspaper in the country but did not last due to lack of financial sustainability, partly attributable to its schizophrenic editorial policy (Ronning and Kupe 2000, 168). Apart from newspapers, there were also a number of magazines. These include *Horizon* (1991), a hard hitting and investigative magazine started by journalists using donor funds. Like the *Daily Gazette, Horizon* had a precarious existence due to financial difficulties but soldiered on until the beginning of the new millennium.

Ronning and Kupe (2000, 167) note that the SIDA grant which started *Horizon* angered some ruling party members and the issue was debated in parliament. Capitalising on the upsurge of disillusionment associated with the economic downturn, the press funnelled and amplified the grievances of the urban populace, thereby helping to counterbalance the views of the state-owned press. By the beginning of the millennium, Zimbabwe had enjoyed the "taste of a free press" (Ronning and Kupe 2000, 170) capable of undercutting state propaganda by providing an outlet to oppositional voices.

However, it was the establishment of the *Daily News* in 1999, which radically altered the face of Zimbabwe's *mediascape* (Chari 2010). The *Daily News* was a brainchild of the Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ) Pvt Ltd, a consortium of Zimbabwean institutional and corporate private investors "backed by companies and individuals with publishing interests in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and South Africa" and a chain of provincial newspapers in Zimbabwe (Ronning and Kupe 2000, 171). However all the ANZ provincial newspapers folded due to financial difficulties but the *Daily News* and its sister paper; The *Daily News on Sunday* overcame these adversities and became the bestselling newspapers in the country until their closure in 2003. At its peak the paper sold about 100 000 copies compared to its competitor, the state-owned *The Herald* which sold about 90 000 (Waldahl 2004, 37).

Some of the key personalities behind the ANZ include a former editor of *The Chronicle* who shot to prominence after exposing the Willowgate scandal mentioned earlier in this chapter. The establishment of *the Daily News* coincided with the formation of the MDC and the paper became a vital outlet for the opposition party. Its adversarial style meant a collision with the government which, was by then on its back foot, was inevitable. The clearest indication of this came in 2002 when the government passed the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). AIPPA compelled journalists to register with the Media and Information Commission (MIC), a body established under AIPPA to monitor and licence mass media services.

Many media organisations complied with the law, but ANZ refused to do so, resulting in its newspapers being discontinued in September 2003, thus triggering a protracted legal battle with the state. The Weekly Tribune, owned by a former journalist and Zanu (PF) Member of Parliament also fell victim to AIPPA after failing to comply with some sections of the Act resulting in their licences being withdrawn by MIC in 2004 (IRIN, 11 June 2004). In 2005 the *Weekly Times* based in the country's second largest city, Bulawayo was also closed by the MIC for "misrepresenting" information on its application for accreditation (Pambazuka, 2005). The closure of these newspapers witnessed hoards of journalists emigrating in search of alternative means of livelihoods.

Some of the journalists who left the country started pirate radio stations beaming into Zimbabwe with the assistance of foreign donors, notably Studio 7 (hosted by the Voice of America), SW Radio[10] based in the London and Voice of the People (VOP) while others started online news publications and websites catering for Zimbabwean citizens in the diaspora and those abroad, the major ones being *ZimOnline.com*, *NewZimbabwe.com*, the *Zimbabwesituation.com, Zimdaily*, *The Zimbabwe* Times[11], Bulawayo24 and Nehanda Radio.

Apart from political and legal factors, the haemorrhaging economy, particularly between 2003 and 2008 (the dark decade of the press) also contributed to the shrinkage of media space. For instance, the *Daily Mirror* and *The Sunday Mirror*, owned by Dr. Ibbo Mandaza closed in March 2007, leaving the media space much thinner in terms of views and opinions[12]. Their ambiguous editorial policies (being neither pro-state nor pro-opposition) meant that they were able to balance the views of the state-owned press and the privately-owned press during the period of the interregnum. After the closure of the two newspapers only a few newspapers remained operating but the print-runs were very low.[13] Former ANZ executive Chris Mbanga and his wife started the tabloid size, *The Zimbabwean* in London in 2004 to fill the lacuna left by the closure of the *Daily News*. Thus the government claimed the lion's share of the press market with two daily newspapers[14] (*The Herald and The Chronicle*) and the four weekly newspapers, *The Sunday Mail*, *The Sunday News*, *Kwayedza/Umthunya* (vernacular) and the *Manica Post*.

[10] SW Radio was closed in 2014 due to financial difficulties after losing its donors.

[11] Now defunct, after its owner Geoff Nyarota returned to Zimbabwe in 2009.

[12] It was very difficult to know the print run of newspapers as media organisations became very secretive about it because they did not want advertisers to know. There was a rumour that some of the major weekly newspapers were printing not more than 5000 copies.

[13] Between 2007 and 2009 most of the newspapers operating were owned by the government. The only privately-owned newspapers that were left include The Financial Gazette, owned by the then Reserve Bank Governor, Gideon Gono, The Zimbabwe Independent and The Standard, both owned by South Africa-based Zimbabwean entrepreneur, Trevor Ncube, who is also owner of Mail & Guardian (South Africa).

[14] The state daily newspapers increased to four in 2009 after the introduction of two tabloid newspapers, the H-Metro published in Harare and the B-Metro published in Bulawayo

In addition, New Ziana, a multi-media news agency ran newspapers through its newspaper publishing arm, the Community Newspapers Group (CNP) which were based in the country's ten provinces.

In terms of reporting, the press in Zimbabwe has for the better part of the last decade been polarised along political lines to such an extent that the public press is known as the government press while the privately owned press is called the opposition press. The two have been engaged in a perpetual 'warfare' characterised by entrenched views with the state-owned press acting as a propaganda arm of the government while the privately-owned press has signed a pact with the opposition to hear no evil, speak no evil and see no evil concerning the affairs of the opposition (Chari 2009, 55). There is no reference point in terms of news meaning that news readers are forced to buy all the newspapers in order to get a complete account of what will be happening in the country because newspapers take extreme positions on any issue Zimbabwean. This dilemma is succinctly captured by one critic thus:

> The polarisation in our society is best depicted in the press. Basically the press is either pro-government or anti-government. Sometimes objectivity is sacrificed at the altar of expediency in order to be true to their chosen position…If you buy newspapers from one divide you will get half the story (Pathisa Nyathi, cited in MMPZ 2002, 87).

Thus the social and political lives of Zimbabwean citizens are intricately interwoven with the press and in turn implicated in the country's politics and society. After the inception of the Government of National Unity in 2009 the fortunes of the press also changed. Apart from the bouncing back to the streets of the *Daily News* and its sister paper, the *Daily News on Sunday*, more than 20 publications have been licensed by the reconstructed Media and Information Commission, now the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC).

The first newspapers to be granted licences in May 2010 were News *Day* owned by Trevor Ncube's Alpha Media Holdings, *The Mail* owned by Fruitlink Ventures a privately-owned company owned by a youth organisation (Afrol News 2010), the *Daily Gazette*, owned by Modus Publications, the *Daily News* and the *Daily News on Sunday* (re-licensed after being closed in 2003), both owned by ANZ (see Mpofu 2010; Banya 2010) (see Chapter One). Seven organisations were registered in April 2011.

These include *New Times Media* (monthly magazine), Ekxi Investment (monthly business magazine), Swim Africa Media (weekly newspaper and by-monthly magazine), *Zimbabwe Heritage* (weekly newspaper), Joe's Low (motoring magazine), and the Sentinel Publications (weekly Christian magazine) *(News Day*, 2011). In addition, *The Zimbabwean* and its sister paper *The Zimbabwean on Sunday* run by UK based former *Daily News* executive and *The Observer* fronted by former Alpha Media Holdings journalist Barnabas Thondlana were granted licences in July 2012 (Bulawayo News 24 2012).[15] Other newspapers that were licensed during the tenure of the inclusive government include *The Patriot* (2011) believed to be owned by former journalist and Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services, Super Mandiwanzira (Nehanda Radio 2014), the *Southern Eye* and the *Southern Eye on Sunday*[16] (2013) both owned by Trevor Ncube's Alpha Media Holdings (*NewZimbabwe.com* 2014). Some of the newspapers, notably, *The Observer*, *The Daily Gazette* and *The National Daily* which is owned by the family of the late black empowerment activist, Roger Boka had not started operating in 2016 and the ZMC, the licensing body was concerned about this development (BiZCommunity.com 2011). Thus by 2014, Zimbabwe boasted of a fairly diversified and vibrant press, but unlike the last decade the economy and not politics is the major threat to press freedom and media diversity.

Many of the licensed newspapers have failed to take off the ground and the majority of those existing are struggling to keep their operations afloat as the financial crunch persists (Biriwasha 2011). Copy sales and advertising revenues are declining (*NewZimbabwe.com* 7 August 2014) and buying newspapers has become a luxury for many in an economy where the lowest civil servant is paid USD500 (*NewZimbabwe.com* 6 September 2014). News content still lacks diversity as many voices are excluded in the national discourse. As observed by one newspaper reader news headlines are "obsessed with politics yet very few people are benefitting from this kind of coverage" (Biriwasha 2011).

[15] See also News Day, 3 August 2012.

[16] The Southern Eye on Sunday closed in July 2014 due to lack of financial sustainability and there were reports that its sister paper, The Southern Eye would merge with the Newsday (NewZimbabwe.com 2014)

Like many African countries, the distribution of newspapers is mainly in the urban centres while rural areas, where, in the case of Zimbabwe about, 70% of the population resides, are marginalised (Biriwasha 2011). After the 2013 elections won by ZANU (PF) and the second split of the opposition, MDC in 2014, the polarization is less poignant. Citizens pin their hopes for access to views alternative to the state on online social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and other social media platforms as prospects in the mobile telephony industry look brighter than ever. Through these platforms people can interact and share information with friends and relatives, thereby boosting the mobile Internet usage (Kabweza 2014). Through citizen journalism they are not only able to shape the news agenda but also safe-guard their rights (*The Zimbabwemail.com* 2014).

Although there are infrastructural challenges, the prospects are bright. Internet and Mobile telephony subscriptions are growing in leaps and bounds. As at December 2013 there were 5.2 million Internet subscribers representing 39.8% penetration rate and there were 14million mobile telephone subscribers (representing103.5% penetration) (*The Herald* 2014). The bulk of the internet subscribers are mobile internet connections using 2G, 2.5G and 3G connections mainly provided by Econet, Telecel, NetOne, Africom and Powertel (Kabweza, 2014). Despite the economic challenges, the press situation is more optimistic compared to 1980. The unfolding technological revolution portends a growing citizen agency in the future as the press gradually loses its monopoly to set the media agenda and to frame issues. Citizens will be able to use the multiplicity of online sources at their disposal to interrogate press framing of key national debates and events such as political violence in a robust manner.

4.8 The Concept of Fragility

Although many scholars foreground social fragility as the condition in which election violence thrives or as the root cause of election violence (see Mueller, 2011; Kirwin and Cho 2009; Biegon 2009; Sisk 2008; Straus and Taylor 2007) there is no consensus on what it exactly means. In some cases the terms ‘fragile state’ and ‘failed state’ are conflated. Some scholars define a fragile state as a state that “fails to deliver to its citizens basic services and the security to go about their daily lives” (Sen 2008, 2).

Forrest (2003, 11) describes a fragile state as a state that is no longer able "to carry out its security and hegemony functions by more "normal" or peaceful means…" A fragile state, however, is generally understood to mean a weak state or a state that is "failing to meet popular demands, leaving the masses in grinding poverty" (Biegon 2009, 5). The definition preferred in this thesis is given by Vallings and Moreno- Torres who content that:

> Fragility can occur when poverty or economic decline are combined with presence of weak state institutions that cannot manage the real grievances caused by, for example, inequitable distribution of resources or unequal access to formal institutions. Essentially, this means that in fragile states political institutions are not strong enough to manage effectively the natural conflicts that occur in society. The 'fragility' or weakness will be evident at any time that the state undergoes processes of economic, political and social change (cited in Biegon 2009, 5).

In the specific context of this thesis, therefore, a fragile state is one, which, owing to a number of underlying historical and contemporary factors lacks social, economic and political stability to the extent that it can no longer have authority and the efficiency to manage grievances pertaining to unequal distribution of natural resources, services and access to key national institutions to its wider population. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, the multi-layered crisis which afflicted Zimbabwe at the turn of the century laid bare its pretense of a stable democracy, thereby exposing its fragility.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter gave a socio-political and historical background by highlighting the key events that shaped discourses on electoral violence in Zimbabwe from independence in 1980 to 2013. It examined the country's colonial legacy, the struggles to liberate the country, the reconciliation policy, the civil war in Matebeleland, the one-party state debate, the adoption of neo-liberal policies, the land revolution and the ensuing economic crisis at the turn of the century. The chapter also showed that the elections which took place between 1980 and 1999 demonstrate how certain patterns of narratives and practices engendered moods of bitterness throughout the electoral history of the country. In this regard the chapter also discussed how elections held between 2000 and 2013 in Zimbabwe have engendered social and political tensions. The chapter also highlighted the media context in Zimbabwe from independence to the present, demonstrating its political economy, interface with the state and society and its enmeshment with the politics of the day.

Discursive constructions of election violence cannot be fully comprehended outside the historical antecedents and the broader context in which electoral contests are performed. Finally, the chapter argues that the historical, social economic and political events highlighted in this chapter significantly shaped the press and citizen discourses on election violence. The concept of a fragile society (state) was also defined in order to shed light on the backdrop against which electoral violence is mediated and consumed. The next chapter analyses press discourses on election violence during presidential and parliamentary elections held between 2000 and 2013, paying particular attention to specific themes.

CHAPTER 5: COMPETING NARRATIVES ON ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN THE PRESS

5.1 Introduction

> The processes of selection and inclusion, and, by implication, of exclusion contradict the view that the news media give a full and comprehensive account of 'world events'. They offer only a selection of world events. This has major implications for the 'news' and its claims of 'truth' (Negrine 1989, 140).

The above quotation is an apt summary of the key arguments made in this and the next chapter both of which are based on the corpus of archival textual data and examine press discourses on election violence during presidential and parliamentary elections held between 2000 and 2013 in Zimbabwe. The analysis in these two chapters brings to the fore the tension between theories that suggest that the media merely reflect on social reality and those that contend that reality is socially constructed. Underpinning this argument is the Foucauldian conception of discourse whereby discourse is viewed as the reproduction of a particular regime of truth and knowledge distributed through text and talk. Thus discourse is embedded in relations of power. Understood this way discourse is then viewed as representations of versions of reality whereby meanings are ascribed rather than being intrinsic. The way in which the press constructs stories on election violence creates certain expectations among the readers who become accustomed to certain regimes of truth. It is these competing versions of reality that are the focus of this and the next chapter.

This chapter discusses three themes namely, discourses on levels of election violence, attribution of responsibility, and the authority-disorder discourse. In order to broaden the insights on the way in which power and control are enacted in the news production process and the institutional logic behind it, data drawn from interviews with journalists and editors (see Chapter Three) were used to complement the textual data analysed in this chapter and the next chapter.

The textual data principally address the HOW question of the research question, that is, how the selected newspapers discursively constructed electoral violence, while data from the interviews with journalists and editors are used to answer the WHY aspect of the research question which sheds light on the rationale for such construction. Since discourse is embedded in relations of power the press's representation of electoral violence has the potential to set the limits on the citizens' social knowledge (McCullough, 2002) and possibly influence their electoral choices.

The main argument advanced in this chapter is that Zimbabwean state-owned and privately-owned newspapers produced competing discourses about electoral violence pitting what I have called a 'national interest' discourse against a liberal human rights discourse respectively. These discourses demonstrate the instrumental logic of electoral violence whereby the press becomes instruments for either retaining or capturing power. In addition these discursive constructions of electoral violence mirror the contours chalked by the political bifurcation of Zimbabwean society which became a hotbed for 'activist journalism'.

5.2 Responsibility Attribution: Constructions of Perpetrators and Victims of Electoral Violence

5.2.1 MDC is the aggressor; Zanu (PF) is a passive victim

Amid the deeply polarised electoral environment and the progressive intensification of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe, the representation of election violence produced antagonistic discourses with the state-owned press mainly attributing election violence to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) while the privately-owned press blamed the ruling Zanu (PF) and the state[17]. The state-owned press published a significant number of stories blaming the MDC for all or the election violence[18], particularly during the 2000 general elections and the 2002 presidential elections (which were combined with municipal elections).

[17] As the economic and political crisis progressively worsened the distinction between the state and the ruling party became more and more blurred, largely attributable to the siege mentality occasioned by sanctions and external interference.

[18] An example of news headlines which support this include: "31 injured as MDC supporters raid Zanu (PF) candidate's home" (*The Herald,* 19-06-2000, p1), "MDC supporters assault suspected Zanu (PF) youths"(The

The overwhelming number of news articles in the state press blaming the MDC for election violence harks back on fundamental questions relating to framing practices and semantic choices which lay the basis for 'othering' the opposition.

This 'othering' meant blaming the opposition for most of the violence through the mobilisation of a repertoire of pejorative sobriquets which sought to diminish the MDC's democratic credentials. Thus the state-owned press constructed MDC supporters as "thugs" (*The Herald*, 19-06-2000, p5, 30-06-08), "mobs"(*The Herald*, 24-05-2000, p1,), "marauding gangs" (*The Herald*, 16-06-2000, p1) "rowdy" (*The Herald*, 12-03-02, p4), "blood-letting"(*The Herald*, 11-07-13, 10) or "berserk" which implies that the MDC was violent, criminal, bloodthirsty and destructive and hence was not worth voting for. In the state press the MDC supporters were also described as "killers" (*The Herald*, 13-06-2000, 4, 03-06-2000, p5, *The Sunday Mail*, 07-06-08, p2), "assassins" (*The Herald*, 19-06-2000, 10), and "arsonists" (*The Herald*, 11-07-13, 3).

Such depictions framed the MDC as an evil party deserving a brutal clampdown by the law- enforcement agents. The accusation that the MDC had introduced "a culture of violence in Zimbabwe" (*The Herald* (16-03-02, p1) made it appear commonsensical that such a clamp-down was long overdue. *The Herald* reasoned that:

> The birth of the MDC brought pronounced violence to the Zimbabwean political scene. This can be understood from the perspective that the MDC leadership comprises people who in their years at the university have been militant in their approach to national issues.

The Sunday Mail (11-06-00, p5) argued that the MDC's violent streak had a long history dating as far back as the "run up to the February (2000) referendum on the draft constitution when the MDC/NCA alliance embarked on a violent campaign to disrupt report back meetings of the Constitutional Commission".

Herald 19-06-2000, p5), "MDC youths provoke violence in Hwedza: Police"(The Herald, 23-06-2000, p5), "MDC plans pre-election country-wide terror campaign"(The Sunday Mail, 10-02-02, p1), "MDC youths embark on terror campaign" (The Sunday Mail, 24-02-02, p1), "MDC unleashes violence" (The Herald, 05-04-05, p1), "MDC gun men kill two Zanu (PF) supporters" (The Sunday Mail, 07-06-08, p1), "MDC –T attacks party supporter" (The Herald, 14-07-13, p2),

It was also claimed that opposition supporters were emulating their leader, Morgan Tsvangirai who "had vowed to remove President Mugabe from power" (*The Herald*, 27-02-02, p4), a veiled reference to the Tsvangirai's threat to remove President Mugabe "violently" (Ferret, 2000) if he did not step down voluntarily.[19] In order to demonstrate that the culture of election violence was alien to Zimbabwe until the formation of the MDC the state-owned press claimed that Zimbabwe had held many multi-party elections since 1980 without any violence, which of course was inaccurate. Quoting the then ZANU (PF) Secretary for Information and Publicity, Dr. Nathan Shamuyarira (late) *The Herald* (27-02-02, p4) reported that Zimbabwe had "been holding multi-party elections without violence". The newspaper went on to selectively recount the different political parties that had graced the Zimbabwean political scene in the 1990s adding that "there was no violence at all" during that time. This is not entirely correct particularly in view of the fact that cases of election violence since independence in 1980 are well-documented (Kriger, 2005). However, The *Herald* conveniently glossed over these in order to create the impression that election violence was a new phenomenon synonymous with the formation of the MDC.

While the causes and scale of violence in previous elections is debatable, that violence has been a feature of electoral contests in Zimbabwe since 1980 is irrefutable. Attempts to understand why the state press constructs the opposition MDC as the aggressor and Zanu (PF) a passive victim of violence appear to be justified on the basis of conveniently selected past incidences that portray the MDC as an agent provocateur.

[19] Tsvangirai is reported to have said "What we would like to tell Mugabe today is that please go peacefully. If you don't want to peacefully, we will remove you violently. The country cannot afford Mugabe a day longer than necessary". He was addressing a gathering of his supporters in Harare at the occasion of his party's first anniversary.

The Editor of *The Herald*, Caesar Zvayi said this was justified on the grounds that:

> We hold that view because we have seen a number of times, for instance, the MDC supporters can, they know that Zanu (PF) is holding a rally in this area, they go there to provoke a situation and then you have these correspondents, some of them who moonlight for international media take those images and send the outside world. But it's not always the case that it is MDC that provokes, Zanu (PF) on the other hand they also provoke the MDC. So it's 50:50 situation but you find that it is more on the side of the MDC because they have that agenda to portray the electoral environment as not conducive for elections. But of course the supporters clash in the residential areas, in the rural areas but you find that the contrived part of it, it comes from the opposition (Ceasar Zvayi, Interview, 7 May, 2015, Harare).

These narratives demonstrate the power of selectivity at two levels. The first level entails sanitizing all past elections as violence free while amplifying violence in contemporary elections as a discursive strategy to justify the dubious causal link between 'rising' election violence and the MDC. The second level of selectivity entails picking on an isolated event (the opposition leader's speech at Rufaro stadium) making it the basis for all future actions of the opposition in order to justify the blame. This discursive strategy dovetails with Akpabio's "framing up" technique discussed in Chapter Two, which essentially entails selecting and organising news stories in order to foster a one-dimensional interpretation of events (Akpabio, 2011, 45). Such a technique might have mobilised negative feelings against the opposition thereby exacerbating rather than abating election violence. Akpabio (2011, 46) correctly observes that:

> …persistent and negative framings are always a precursor to something evil. A dominant portrayal of enemies is to dehumanize them which justifies any mistreatment meted out to them.

The implication for this faulty premise is that the state-owned press might have advertently and inadvertently promoted election violence in the sense that, the persistent negative framing of the opposition created an alibi for the annihilation of the opposition while the selective and one-dimensional interpretation might have galvanised opposition members to indulge in unlawful activities since they viewed themselves as victims of unlawful persecution. This is important because discourse has consequences in that it always translates into particular action and behaviour.

The study by Steauter and Wills (2009) on Canadian media representation of the war on terror discussed in Chapter Two is salutary in this regard. They rightly point out that once an "enemy" has been stereotyped it becomes psychologically acceptable for him or her to engage in atrocities (Steatur and Wills, 2009, 19). Hobart concurs with this observation when he notes that stereotyping the "enemy" may make the case of the perpetrators of violence appear common cause (Hobart 2007, 190). He argues that:

> Particular assumptions about space, time narrative, personhood, agency, and causation are distinctive of different genres; and are combined in ways that, through reiteration, give a sense of naturalness and self-evident truth to what are carefully constructed and inherently mediated accounts (Hobart 2007, 190).

In the case of the state-owned press such assumptions about the opposition being responsible for introducing violence into Zimbabwean politics and their reiteration in the state-owned press may justify violence against the opposition since it is blamed for having started it in the first place.

5.2.2 MDC provokes violence, Zanu (PF) reacts

Although Zanu (PF) was predominantly projected as an innocent victim of MDC, violence there were occasional discursive slippages in the state-owned press which unwittingly betrayed this as a façade. It was often reported that the MDC was largely responsible for "triggering the violence"(*The Sunday Mail,* 04-06-2000, p1-4) (**see Appendix 1.1**) while Zanu (PF) or the state "reacted" or "retaliated" (*The Herald,* 23-05-2000, p1) in order to restore law and order. Examples of news headlines which support this are: "MDC committed **most** of political crimes" (*The Herald,* 16-03-02, p1), "MDC perpetrates **more** violence on the ruling party" (*The Sunday Mail,* 11-06-2000, p5). The words in bold suggest the existence of more than one agent, meaning that the MDC could not have possibly perpetrated violence alone.

The Sunday Mail story (11-06-2000, p5) headlined "MDC perpetrates more violence on the ruling party" (**see Appendix 1.2)** is illustrative in this regard. The newspaper sought to rebut allegations by an Amnesty International report that Zanu (PF) was responsible for most of the violence in the run-up to the 2000 general elections.

It quoted police officials who refuted the Amnesty International report, adding that the MDC was responsible for the lion's share of electoral violence in the country. The newspaper accused the Amnesty International report of being "one-sided" mentioning that:

> While the just released Amnesty International Report on the forthcoming elections chronicled in greater detail incidents of violence perpetrated against members of the MDC there were no reports of violence against members of the ruling Zanu (PF) party.

The Sunday Mail gave a litany of incidents of election violence allegedly perpetrated by the MDC dating back to February 2000 in order to prove that the MDC was not "an innocent bystander" as far as election violence was concerned. In rationalizing the view that the MDC is the one that introduced political violence the blame discourse congeals into moral equivalence. The Herald Editor, Ceasar Zvayi said that:

> *When the MDC was launched on September 11, 1999, a year after that we saw Tsvangirai at the first anniversary celebrations at Rufaro Stadium. On 11 September 2000 the MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai took to the podium and uttered his infamous statement that "What we are going to tell Mugabe today is please go peacefully. If you don't go peacefully we will remove you violently". It's there on camera, it's there on record, he said it at Rufaro Stadium. And in the grand stands MDC supporters were busy tearing the copies of The Herald, burning them in the grand stands. And from there when they left their rally as they went into town, they were beating up people, known Zanu (PF) supporters and from there, Tsvangirai's language to his supporters they saw Zanu (PF) people as enemies and it escalated political clashes between Zanu (PF) and rival political parties which is why the MDC brought that culture of political violence because we never saw it when other political parties like ZUM, Zanu Ndonga and so on over the years but as soon as the MDC came onto the political scene we started seeing people beating each other which we had not seen with other opposition parties since independence* (Ceasar Zvayi, Interview, 7 May, 2015, Harare).

Asked why the state-owned Sunday newspaper, *The Sunday Mail* tends to portray the MDC as the one that introduced a culture of violence in Zimbabwean politics the acting editor of the paper, Mabasa Sasa, was more circumspect than Zvayi, his counterpart at the state-owned daily, *The Herald*.

Sasa accentuated the moral equivalence frame (discussed below) suggesting that both MDC and Zanu (PF) are to blame for starting violence but went further to say that the MDC had a greater propensity to commit election violence because it stood to benefit financially and through what he termed the "politics of pity". Sasa said:

> *OK, ah, for starters I would think both, both major parties ehmm, have been quite responsible for acts of violence, have been involved, it becomes difficult to see exactly…it's like a chicken and egg. It becomes difficult to see who exactly started the violence. What we do know is that the violence, having been started, ahmm, there is a political party that has thrived on that violence, with the politics of pity. One claiming we are a victim. Aah, two, it gives them access to resources, saying, we need money to defend ourselves or whatever reason. So they get money. Three, it serves to delegitimise the state. I do not think that Zanu (PF) would benefit as much from violence as MDC would, Zanu (PF) being a governing party, holding instruments of the state. It has nothing to gain by fighting people who have no instruments whatsoever. Whereas MDC stands to benefit the most from violence, one, by getting that pity, two, by financial support, three by de-legitimising the state. So on the whole I believe its MDC which stands to gain more and naturally we will then assume that, eh, they are responsible for a lot of that violence. A-ahmm, there have been allegations of ah, due to that, ah, external influence we get allegations of serious training of these people where they start getting, ah, they start using the same tactics used by the Selous Scouts (Rhodesian hit squad), very simple things , ah, you go and dress up in Zanu (PF) regalia, you beat up people. You are an MDC person, you wear a Zanu (PF) T-shirt, you cause violence, and it's blamed on Zanu (PF). So I really don't see Zanu (PF) having benefited much from violence whereas MDC it seems, it, violence became quite a cornerstone of the, of the national policy, the drive to get into power* (Mabasa Sasa, Interview, 15 May, 2015, Harare)

The implication of this statement is that it does not matter whether the MDC started the violence or not, the fact that the party is perceived as profiting from election violence implies that it has more incentives for starting violence than the ruling party. Profiting from violence is no different from starting the violence. This implies that it was in the national interest for the state-owned press to project the MDC as a perpetrator of election violence since it is the only party that stood to benefit from election violence.

5.2.3 Mystification: Fighting against 'invisible' forces

A story published in *The Herald* (12-06-2000, p8) in which the comment of Zanu (PF) parliamentary candidate for Harare East in the 2000 general election, Mau Mau who is also a war veteran reveals the rationale for Zanu (PF)'s 'retaliatory violence' narrative. Mau Mau, who was addressing a rally in Harare, is reported to have commended his supporters "for not engaging in violence in the constituency in the count down to the elections, but said *they would retaliate if provoked by the opposition*" (emphasis added). The then Zanu (PF) Mashonaland Central provincial chairperson, Border Gezi who was accompanying Mau Mau made a revealing statement. Gezi is reported to have said:

> …the whites "whom we defeated" were now coming back through the back door through black puppets. This time they are using a puppet, Morgan Tsvangirai, but we know that it is them. *Kana torova tsuro tinorova nedenhe racho* (when we try to beat a hare hiding behind bushes we will not discriminate the hare from the bushes.

The statement by Gezi, then a senior member of Zanu (PF) is quite crucial in understanding the instrumental logic of election violence and its mediation in the state owned-press. The fact that Zanu (PF) believes that it is not fighting the MDC but formidable and invisible force is so significant in so far as it shapes the discursive constructions of election violence in the state-owned press, not only as inevitable under the circumstances but also as legitimate tool for repelling neo-colonial forces. The view that Zanu (PF) was battling bigger forces was made more succinctly by President Mugabe. Addressing the 43rd Ordinary Session of his party's Central Committee soon after the "close shave" 2000 general elections in which the party obtained 63 seats against the MDC's 57.

Mugabe reminded his members that:

> Often a myth is peddled that ZANU (PF) lost to a nine months old opposition party. Nothing can be further from the truth. Whilst we expect our enemies to peddle such a myth, we should never allow it to take root in our minds. Such a misconception encourages us to underestimate the forces ranged against us, and to underplay the significance of our hard earned victory. The MDC should never be judged or characterised by its black trade union face; by its youthful student face; by its salaried black suburban junior professionals; never by its rough and violent high density *lumpen* elements. It is much deeper than these human superficies; for it is immovably and implacably moored in the colonial yesteryear and embraces wittingly or unwittingly the repulsive ideology of return to white settler rule. MDC is as old and as strong as the forces that control it; that converge on it and control it; that drive and direct; indeed that support, sponsor it. It is a counter-revolutionary Trojan horse contrived and nurtured by the very inimical forces that enslaved and oppressed our people yesterday (Mugabe 2001, 88-89).

Words and phrases such as "enemies", "hard earned victory", "forces against us", "operation", "violent", "the forces that control it", and "inimical forces" evoke a militaristic stance and did not just frame the MDC as the "other, but also laid the basis for its liquidation. Further, although Mugabe's statement appears to be unpacking the MDC it has got the effect of mystifying it because that which harbours it is not fully known because of the "bushes". If you are not sure about the strength of your enemy don't underestimate them. A basis for the liquidation of the MDC using excessive force became material owing to the perception that the MDC was an enemy hiding behind bushes hence the state-owned press constructed discourses that legitimised violence against the MDC. The mystification of the MDC's strength implied that discursively the opposition party was constructed not as a minion but a very treacherous force that needed to be repelled by any means necessary.

The view that the MDC is only but a front and that there are "invisible forces" behind much of the election violence in Zimbabwe was explained as follows by Mabasa Sasa, the acting editor of *The Sunday Mail*:

> There has been sufficient anecdotal evidence which indicates that there are outsiders who are prepared to finance Zimbabweans to fight each other. At one point it actually became an issue for the SADC summit, ah where it was alleged that ah, members of the opposition were getting military training abroad, in Botswana and Morocco and it was something that had to be addressed at Heads of State level. So I believe yaah, there is that very serious external interference.

The perception that there are invisible forces behind election violence has forced the state-owned press to take a hard line stance in defending the ruling party position in relation to election violence. Again, Mabasa Sasa explains thus:

> Ah, umm, perhaps we would need to explain what it is that we stand for. We are a member of the Zimpapers Group and the name itself says a lot, Zimpapers 1980 Ltd. It is a statement, a declaration of independence. Eh, for us, it is a marker, a key marker of the timeline of this nation. 1980 represents everything that, eh, we want our country to be, sovereign, independent, eh, majority government, a peaceful united country. So our values as Zimpapers are inextricably linked to the values of the independence struggle. Hence, the name 1980. So our editorial policy is largely informed by the politics of nationalism, of Pan-Africanism, of independence. So when faced with threats such as these external threats, this external interference, this meddling in our politics to try and destabilise us as a country, naturally, we, we have the mandate to defend those values that are expressed in our independence of 1980. So naturally, we become more robust in defence of our national interest, when faced by such threats, ahmm, not just in a defensive manner, we have to go offensive as well in defence of our country. So yeah, over the years, the, as this external threat became more and more apparent we too have become more robust in our responses to that threat. Ah, with, our intent being, ah, upholding the integrity of our state (Interview with Mabasa Sasa, 15 May, 2015, Harare).

Sasa's sentiments were corroborated by Ceasar Zavyi, The Editor of The Herald who stated that:

> *I believe that there is really a third force. Whenever we have elections there is a third force behind the elections because Zimbabweans are generally peaceful people but whenever an election is called, some they, especially the youth they become violent towards each other and you find Western correspondents sneaking into the country through South Africa because they don't want to be accredited, they will sneak into the country and report, file, ah, ah, inflammatory reports claiming they, will be covering things in hiding, contriving, ah, in fact there was the US ambassador at one point was implicated in stage managing a violent scene in Mashonaland West during the land reclamations when war veterans invaded a certain farm, he was accused of paying some people to clash so that they could record that as evidence that people were being beaten up. We have that in our archives. So really I believe to a certain extent especially, eh, from 2000 there was a 3rd force at play in promoting this violence because you find that people who can't afford a dollar for a grinding mill would afford some sophisticated weaponry, some teargas canisters, some paint canisters and so on to deface buildings. So really, some, it shows that a lot of effort, a lot of funding would have been poured to create that situation so that they justify their claim that there is no democracy in Zimbabwe* (Interview with Ceasar Zvayi, 7 May, 2015, Harare)

In the larger discursive scheme, projecting Zanu (PF) as responding to "invisible" external threats against national sovereignty could have possibly made the nation more polarized. The robustness and "offensive" strategies encompassed discursive strategies that tended to justify violence against the opposition and its alleged external funders as has been demonstrated in the example of Border Gezi above. At the same time, constructing the ruling party as engaged in a mortal fight with "invisible forces" helps to minimise the ruling party's moral blameworthiness while at the same time sanitising the backlash on "fronts" of the external forces, who in this case would be the opposition.

5.2.4 Both parties are to blame: A False Moral Equivalence?

The 'mystery' about the existence of a much bigger and invisible force lurking behind the opposition gave way to discourses about a power symmetry in the state-owned press which found expression in a false moral equation whereby Zanu (PF) and MDC were portrayed as equally to blame for the election violence. Examples of news headlines which attest to this are "MDC-Zanu (PF) blamed for flare-up of violence" *The Herald*, 23-05-2000, p1), and "Fresh clashes in Karoi" (*The Herald* 21-03-02, p8).

In a story headlined "Political tension caused by extreme positions", The Herald (19-05-2000, p7) reported that the political tension prevailing at the time was a result of the "extreme positions adopted by the two main rival parties, Zanu (PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change". Quoting a political commentator, Dr. Admore Kambudzi from the University of Zimbabwe, the newspaper claimed that the violence stemmed from the MDC's "super ambition" to form the next government and Zanu (PF)'s "over-reaction" to the rejection of the draft constitution in the February 2000 referendum.

Blaming the "extreme positions" of the two parties does not only rationalise violence but also creates the impression that both are equally morally culpable, what Carr (2000, 84) refers to as "moral equivalence" whereby two sides equally share blame for something. The commentator, an expert from the University (supposedly very knowledgeable) lends legitimacy to the narrative of equal blame as a way of rationalizing election violence. Discourses that project both political parties as equally to blame are effective because they shut out any possibilities for remedial action. The reasoning is that since both political parties are equally to blame nothing can be done about it.

It could be argued that the moral equivalence frame has more to do with institutional processes of news-making such as the need to have a semblance of balance and impartiality and objectivity what (Toscano 1979, 177) called 'dubious neutrality'. Thus the ruling party which is supposed to be an 'innocent victim' suddenly morphs into an active agent in a power symmetry. This clearly demonstrates how meaning is always in a constant flux as it is contingent on context, usage and circumstances (Hall 1997, 9). Thus, meanings are not simply there, but are actively constructed through selections, inflections, inclusion and exclusion.

Apart from professional pressures the state-owned press has also come under the spotlight for its alleged bias in favour of the ruling party (see MMPZ reports mentioned Chapter Two) something which is quite common in Africa.

My conversations with editors and journalists from the state-owned press suggest that the pressure to create a semblance of balance in their reports is palpable although the odds are stacked against them. One line editor said that:

> …there is the challenge of trying to balance the act. You have to balance the act, so you have to make sure the stories which reporters write are not biased towards one party you know…And also there are a lot of rules which you have to follow so you have to be alert (E1).

A state media journalist who has covered elections for over a decade shows how any attempts to balance stories on election violence are frustrated by editorial control and ownership. He held that:

> …the owners, the owners of this paper for instance are related to the Zanu (PF) government. Usually those would always have a say in the story that you write. If it means, when you write a story, if probably there are, have been identified as perpetrators you will be forced not to write about it, then even if you write it would lose, it would be lost along the way because there is no official voice which says you have done this (J2).

This shows how discursive constructions of electoral violence in the state-owned press are circumscribed by tensions between ideological and professional considerations (Machin 2008, 64). It is such considerations which played an important role in determining who was blamed for violence, how they were constructed, what was said about them as well as what was not said about them.

5.2.5 Ex-nomination

It would, however, be misleading to create the impression that the state-owned press only blamed the opposition for election violence. There were some instances where Zanu (PF) supporters were also blamed for election violence although such cases are rare. The statement by Mabasa Sasa quoted above is an example of this. Since this study was more interested in discourses rather than a quantitative trajectory of election violence there was a deliberate move to refrain from making further conjectures about quantitative trends. What is noteworthy is the fact that where Zanu- PF was the perpetrator of violence the identification of political affiliation was either delayed or completely omitted and could only be inferred.

For example, in a story headlined "Political violence: MDC candidate killed in Bikita" (*The Herald,* 01-06-2000, p1) the identity of the victims of violence was also glossed over and pejorative adjectival phrases such as "mob", "gang", or "thug" which in the state-owned press would ordinarily be reserved for the opposition MDC are conspicuous by their absence.

Another example where the identity of the perpetrator is omitted is a story headlined "One dies, 13 hurt in Budiriro clashes" The Herald (20-05-2000, p5). The first two paragraphs of the story read:

The Herald

"The 47 Budiriro residents in Harare who were arrested in connection with the political violence which claimed one life and injured 13 other people this week, have not yet been charged as police investigations are still continuing.

Police had by yesterday arrested 30 people in connection with the violence which also saw five buildings, including Dr Hunzvi's surgery, damaged following stone and petrol bomb attacks in the suburb".

The perpetrators of election violence are simply "residents" and the political affiliation of the deceased and the injured are not mentioned. Neither is the nature of political violence mentioned. In another story headlined "15 missing, others injured in violent political clashes" (*The Herald,* 13-05-2000, p5) the political identity of the perpetrators of violence is camouflaged. The first two paragraphs read:

AT LEAST 15 people are reported missing from their homes and several others injured in escalating violent political clashes in Mwenezi, which have led to the closure of at least five schools in the district, South of Masvingo.

In Beatrice, another farmer, Mr. John Weeks was shot and wounded on Thursday night by a group of intruders at his farm.

Curiously, the 15 people injured have no political affiliation and the people who shot and wounded the Beatrice farmer are simply an amorphous "group of unknown intruders". Masking the political identity of the perpetrators of political violence through opaque discursive strategies means that nobody carries the moral burden associated with election violence.

While the motives for masking the identity of Zanu (PF) perpetrators is debatable, conversations with state press journalists suggest that the tightening of editorial controls, particularly during elections held after 2002 appears to be the most plausible reason. According to a journalist at a state-owned newspaper:

> There was a realization that the opposition and its NGO allies were fabricating stories on election violence in order to discredit our elections. So, publishing stories blaming Zanu (PF) would have been viewed as aiding the hand of the enemy. Even if you wrote such a story it would not have seen the light of day (E2).

This view was supported by another state media journalist who said that:

> There are instances where people have brought stories that sort of eh, eh, are pointing fingers at the system (inaudible) and in the end as a journalist you should try to put your story in such a manner that you don't, you are not seen as attacking the system but you are attached also to, you are highlighting issues of political violence between Zanu (PF) and MDC. You then say there has been violence between MDC and Zanu (PF), but it's difficult to say Zanu (PF) started it. You then just say there was political violence. Anyway, you would discover that the other paper will come out with the idea that…even chronicling how the violence was started (J2).

This shows that the construction of a moral equivalence between the opposition and the ruling party was a strategy by state-press journalists to circumvent censorship. The appearance of balance was therefore contrived and nor inspired by professional considerations. As already demonstrated in Mabasa Sasa's statement above perceptions within state press circles that the privately-owned press was on a crusade to taint the image of the ruling party also forced the state press into a defensive mode, whereby they would rebut every story alleging that Zanu- PF was perpetrating election violence. A case in point is a story published in *The Herald* (23-03-05,p1) in which the police were reported to have challenged the chairman of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) Dr. Lovemore Madhuku to produce evidence of his allegations that members of the uniformed forces committed acts of political violence. *The Herald* story did not disclose the full details of the allegations so that readers would be able to judge for themselves. This could have possibly created the impression among the newspaper's readers that the allegations by the MDC were true. In any event, the rebuttals did not create an environment for understanding the complexities of election violence, but rather played host to a culture of denial and burying of heads in the sand by the political elite.

5.3 Nomination: Zanu- PF is the perpetrator, MDC victim

Unlike the state-owned press which was sometimes ambiguous the privately owned press overwhelmingly blamed Zanu (PF) and state security agencies for perpetrating election violence.[20]

The political affiliation of the perpetrators is immediately identified in the story to such an extent that readers are left in no doubt as to who is to blame for destabilising social harmony (For example, "Two Zanu (PF) supporters up for political violence", *Newsday*, 12-07-13, "Zanu (PF) threatens coup", *The Financial Gazette*, 07-03-02). Hobart (2007, 197) notes that:

> Another aspect to the identification of perpetrators is that naming and using the active mood about a chosen grammatical subject has the effect of making it appear as the agent that disrupts the natural order. The contrary process, which Barthes called exnomination, has the effect of masking the agent that disrupts the natural order.

In this instance the identification of the perpetrator is preceded by demands for "concrete action" to be taken against the perpetrators so as to "bring a semblance of normalcy to our tormented nation" (*The Financial Gazette*, 25-05-2000, p8).

[20] Examples of such headlines include: "Zanu (PF) brings Marondera to a halt" (Daily News, 22-05-2000, p2), "Sekeramayi threatens commercial farmers" (Daily News, 23-05, 2000, p2), "Violence: War vets, Zanu (PF) supporters remanded in custody"(Daily News, 23-05-2000, p2) "CIO, ZNA join farm invasions"(The Zimbabwe Independent, 13-07-2000, p10), "Zanu (PF) supporters burn MDC vehicle in Muzarabani, (Daily News, 13-03-02, p15) "Zanu (PF) trio charged with murder of two MDC activists"(Daily News, 01-02-02, p3), "Zanu (PF) forces people to rally"(Daily News 24-07-13, p1-2), "Zanu (PF) trio charged with murder of two MDC activists"(Daily News, 01-02-02, p3), "Militia seize hundreds of ID cards"(The Zimbabwe Independent, 08-02-02, p1), "Government sets up 146 militia bases"(The Zimbabwe Independent, 01-03-02, p4), "Zanu (PF) hijacks church to boots votes, political rallies disguised as prayer meetings"(The Financial Gazette, 17-01-02, p8), "Millions forced to buy Zanu (PF) cards: Extortion sees party raking $500m in three months"(The Financial Gazette, 24-01-02, p6), "Trigger happy cops ignite org of violence in Bulawayo; Police, Zanu (PF) gang up to thwart MDC rally" (The Financial Gazette, 24-01-02, p9), "Zanu (PF) unleashes militia on Byo"(The Financial Gazette, 07-02-02, p20), "Two Zanu (PF) supporters up for political violence"(NewsDay, 12-07-13,p4), "Retired general threatens villagers with war"(NewsDay, 30-07-13,p3).

To this extent a raft of drastic measures are prescribed; the "police must swiftly crack down on anyone perpetrating violence"(*The Financial Gazette*, 08-06-2000, p8) "SADC must stop collaborating with rogue rulers" (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 22-o2-02, p6), that "Mugabe must step down"(*Daily News*, 23-03-02, p4) or simply that observers rein in Zanu (PF) lest the elections will be "rendered null and void" (*The Financial Gazette*, 08-06-2000, 8) and "We need to identify the impediments to a free and fair election so that they become a matter of public record"(*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 08-02-02, p6). The naming of the perpetrator is always followed by the prescription of some form of sanctions to be imposed on the perpetrators. This is consistent with Hobart's assertion that "news is, and presumably sometimes intended to be, agentive. That is, its descriptions frame events so as to anticipate and imply the need for appropriate future action" (Hobart 2007, 200). Such an approach is also consistent with the watchdog function of the press espoused by the privately-owned press.

The acting editor of the privately-owned daily newspaper, Newsday, Wisdom Mudzungaira explained his paper's commitment to the watchdog function thus:

> *…if we do not cover election violence, it therefore means we will be neglecting our role as the watchdog in society. Why? Because elections in Zimbabwe have been very very violent, from way back. Right? Even within the ruling party itself, they always fight alongside, along factional lines. So, so, what we, why we cover them is we want to give everybody a voice. We want to expose those things so that at least the world may know, they may stop to flourish, you, you have to have somebody who will manage the perceptions, who will tell the people what's happening outside the country, ah, and so forth. And I am glad to say that, ah, when we covered the, the, event, the by-elections, ahmm, the 2013 elections they were very, very, peaceful, very, very peaceful. Why? Because the 2008 elections exposed all that happened, and we said we published, No we don't want violence. Because we don't want violence. Observers must come from all over to be with us* (Interview with Wisdom Mudzungairi, 15 May 2015).

The watchdog function of the private press seems to rest on the assumption that the press can deter politicians and their supporters from perpetrating violence the same way election observers monitor untoward electoral behaviour and if they detect an unfair play they blow the whistle. Thus the private press accentuates a liberal human rights discourse which foregrounds the sanctity of civil liberties as well and the sacredness of life.

5.3.1 Demonization

In stressing Zanu (PF) culpability for election violence, the privately-owned press invoked a gamut of images that portrayed Zanu (PF) as an evil party undeserving of the electorate's vote. The use of derogatory labels such as "mobs", "terror squads, "thugs" "gangs", to refer to Zanu (PF) supporters was more prevalent than they were used against the opposition by the state-owned press. Although the state-owned press used similar labels against the MDC, these were more tendentious in the privately-owned press. Examples of news headlines which portray this include: "Zanu (PF) gangs on a looting spree"(*The Zimbabwe Independent,* 18-02-02, p2), "Zanu (PF) mobs burn down MDC polling agents' homes"(*Daily News,* 25-03-02, p18), "Zanu (PF) mob attacks MPs house" (*Daily News,* 28-02-02, p3) "Ramaging Zanu (PF) supporters loot, damage house in Chinhoyi"(*Daily News,* 27-02-02, p19) (**see Appendix 1.3**) , "Rural folk flee orgy of terror"(*Daily News,* 16-05-2000, p1). The derogatory words in these headlines such as "gangs", "mobs", connote criminality while the manner in which the violence is executed, that is, "ramaging" and "rampage" and orgy of terror" evoke barbarism and senselessness.

The privately-owned press also constructed alleged victims of Zanu (PF) violence as innocent, helpless, hapless and harmless. For instance, in a story headlined "MDC appeals for help to end violence"(*The Zimbabwe Independent,* 22-02-02, p2) *The Zimbabwe Independent* reported that "besieged" Movement for Democratic Change leader, Morgan Tsvangirai was appealing for international intervention as "mobs loyal to President Mugabe stepped up their retribution against the party's supporters". The MDC was complaining that its supporters were "being hounded and hunted down, kidnapped, tortured and killed by Zanu (PF) militias". The story further gave a blow-by-blow chronicle of MDC supporters who had fallen victim to Zanu (PF)'s violence. Framing election violence as one-sided ensured that alleged victims of Zanu (PF) violence drew sufficient sympathy from the readers while at the same time magnifying the callousness of the ruling party. Private press journalists justify the use of words such as "mobs", "ramaging", "gangs", "orgy of terror" etc. on the grounds of professional considerations and their ability to capture reality at the material time.

The following statements by some editors of privately-owned newspapers are instructive:

> There is no other way of describing them (the perpetrators of violence. In 2008, 248 people were killed. For what? We want them to feel how bad it is that's why we describe them like that. (**E2, Interview**, 11May, 2015, Harare).

> The Independent press uses such language because these are journalistic stories. We are not writing official reports or diplomatic reports for embassies. We are writing for audiences that want vivid painting of events so that they make much more meaning to them, eh, so you tend to look, eh, not for inciting language but for the sharpest language you can find, eh,, that assumes the context that you are asking in which these words. Instead of just saying "Zanu (PF) officials or supporters beat up MDC supporters" we will use strong language and call them thugs because that's what they are. If you are using extra-legal means to gain, eh, eh, an electoral advantage, you are unleashing violence we call it terror, depending on the scale. We use the words "violence", "terror", "intimidation" depending on the scale. If it is widespread its terror. If it is isolated, its intimidation. If it is systematic its violence. So we use those words depending on the prevailing conditions on the ground. We call it terror when it's all over the places (**Interview with Dumisani Muleya**, 11 May, 2015, Harare)

These views reflect an objectivist stance of social reality whereby certain words and phrases are used in order to effectively convey their message in a forthright manner consistent with the watchdog function whose hallmarks are negativity and aggressiveness (Goran and Otsman 2013, 309). Former editor of the *Daily News*, Geoff Nyarota acknowledges this adversarialism in the private press when he states that:

> You see by the nature of their profession there is a tendency, because you see journalists are always fighting for right and they sometimes, they always take the moral, they want to adopt a moral standpoint and to lecture even to politicians on what is good and what is not good. So they will say if five people were killed the politician may miss the point but if I say there was an orgy in their constituency the politician will…Their intention is good and noble but sometimes it can be misunderstood because the purist will say five people cannot be an orgy, ladies and gentlemen (**Interview with Geoff Nyarota**, 11 May 2015, Harare).

This clearly shows that when reporting on election violence private press journalists tend to assume a higher moral pedestal which enables them to 'lecture' politicians on morality and the emotive words identified above become effective tools for drawing the attention of the politicians.

5.3.2 Humanistic Rhetoric in the private press

The privately-owned press accentuated the human interest dimension of alleged victims of election violence in order to project Zanu (PF) as an evil party. An example of news headlines which speak to this include: "Police raid widow's home" (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 08-02-02, p4). "Observer **pastor** assaulted"(*Daily News*, 13-03-02, p4) "War veterans murder **guard**, assault **farmer**"(*Daily News*, 18-03-02, p2), "Youth terrorise Chivhu **villagers**"(*Daily News*, 08-02-02, p12), "War vets attack **nurses**" (*Daily News*, 25-03-02, p2), "Zanu (PF) youths stone Motswana **woman's** car"(*Daily News*, 06-01-02, p6) and "**Villagers** flee violence to the cities"(*The Financial Gazette*, 25-02-02, p2) (**see Appendix 1.4**).

The running thread in these victims of election violence (widow, pastor, nurse, guard, farmer, villagers, and women) is their vulnerability in society or presumed innocence.[21] The private press exploited these vulnerabilities in order to portray Zanu (PF) as an evil party. This 'parasitic' tendency is best illustrated in "Orphan's house damaged in clashes", (*Daily News*, 22-05-2000, p2) a story which highlighted the plight of a teenage orphan, Tawanda Neshiri whose house was allegedly damaged by war veterans and "suspected Zanu (PF) youths" in the high density suburb of Budiriro.[22] The story is saturated with humanistic rhetoric intended to wring the sympathy of the reader by accentuating the "callousness" of his tormentors. The victim's plight is graphically illustrated. The damage to the house is extensively covered in a riveting and emotional narrative style that leaves the reader completely bewildered. The victim is given a long leash to relieve his ordeal in a testimonial style, thereby heightening the emotions of the readers. He is reported to have said:

> They (Zanu (PF)) supporters threw stones at the house and one of them threw a ball of fire through one window…They later went around telling residents to stay in-doors. Those who refused were taken to Hunzvi's Surgery where they were allegedly assaulted**.**

[21] Although the white farmers belong to an economically powerful group in the specific context of farm occupations they were constructed in the international media and local privately-owned press as victims of "Mugabe's tyrannical rule".

[22] Budiriro is a high density suburb in the capital city Harare.

The use of the pronoun 'they' is a way of 'othering' the alleged perpetrators of election violence which widens the gulf between the 'evil' perpetrators and the readers. Through the victim's narrative readers learn about the ubiquity of Zanu (PF)'s "brutality" and "tyranny". Readers are further told that victim's father died in 1994 and his mother "succumbed in the same month four years later". The story is accompanied by a picture of the teenage boy in school uniform carrying a school bag in order to vividly show the misery of Zanu (PF)'s alleged victim of election violence. The emotive style of the story banishes rationality, thereby generating intense negative feelings against the ruling party. The default line seems to be 'if Zanu (PF) can treat the most vulnerable in society like this how about the rest of the population'?

As a discursive strategy, the power of humanistic rhetoric lies in suspending rationality by saturating readers with humanist values such as compassion, reason, love and the greater good so that the reader is compelled to empathise with the alleged victim (Harvey 2009). Humanistic rhetoric compels the reader to be outraged by the actions of the perpetrator and intensely sympathetic to the victim, what Herman and Chomsky (1988, 43) have described as "worthy victims". The problem with humanistic rhetoric is that a person may become captive to emotion while reason is blighted. Furthermore, it is a parasitic narrative which commodifies the weak, the meek and vulnerable in society by constructing simplistic binaries of 'Devils' and 'Angels' while the complexities of issues fall through the cracks. Such oversimplification plays host to episodic frames and sensational headlines that have more sound than substance. Geoff Nyarota disputes the view that the private press exploited the underdog class for self-fish reasons. He argues that the average reader of his newspaper, the *Daily News* was personally affected by the election violence and would have wanted to know what was happening around them adding that "the perpetrators were also interested that's why they would beat up a rival reading a newspaper that covers violence".

Nyarota further adds that:

> As a journalist I have tended to align myself with the underdogs. Aah, if I see a rich man, rich, pompous, ah, evidence of being well fed, abusing the poor man, ah, it's not just the Daily News, it's not just me, even you, you will side with the poor man. Even you, you will side with the poor man. So, no apologies. I tended to side with the underdog as matter of policy, and underdogs come in different forms…. You have political underdogs. You have religious underdogs. You have professional underdogs. Not everybody is a professor. You have underdogs in business. Those that line up First Street, trying to sell two tomatoes, where the whole road, everybody on that road, I am talking about the vendors, is also trying to sell two tomatoes. Those are the underdogs of the business… They are business people by the way. They are business underdogs. And you hear the big wigs of First Street now saying "get rid of these people". But the big wigs do not want to look into why those people came there in the first place. Why did they…I have a very interesting picture (retrieving a picture from his cellular phone, the picture shows a vendor hanging his clothes from his car in the Central Business District of Harare, the capital) what's, happening to my... yaah, here we are. You have seen that….Now if I start a newspaper that highlights the plight of underdogs, the mayor will not be happy. The president will not be happy. But the tomato sellers on First Street will be extremely happy. So as a journalist, my own thing, it's, its, ah, it's better to please thousands of powerless people than to please two powerful people (Interview with Geoff Nyarota, 11 May 2015).

The pro-underdog philosophy espoused in the above statement harks back to the liberal human rights philosophy which places high premium on the greater public-the essence for which newspapers are established in the first place. The problem with this argument, however, is that it is framed in normative terms but some scholars argue that the media in many democracies do not have the qualities to operate as effective watchdogs because they are too close to those who wield power (Voltmer 2010, 138). Voltmer (ibid) argues that: "… political reporting is regarded as too opinionated to provide balance gate-keeping; commercial pressure on the news coverage often encourages an emphasis on the trivial and popular at the expense of serious and sustained attention to international affairs and complex issues on the policy agenda". The view of this thesis is that this indictment is not misplaced as it is an apt critique of the press's watchdog function, particularly in politically polarised societies.

5.3.3 The Private Press, Election Violence and Hyperbole

The private press's reportage on election violence was couched in apocalyptic prophecies in order to draw the local and international public's attention. During elections life was portrayed as short and brutish thereby creating the impression that violence was omnipresent[23]. Phrases such a "looting spree", "terror campaign", and "unleash", connote the senselessness of violence while "brutal" and "hacked to death" denote extreme viciousness. The motive behind such representation was to elicit and sustain attention and outrage from both the local and international public. A story headlined "Agency warns on genocide" (*The Financial Gazette*, 28-02-02, p5) (**see Appendix 1.5**) demonstrates the hyperbolic constructions of election violence news in the private press. The story quoted the United States of America based Genocide Watch Group speculating that "Zimbabwe could slide into genocide" ahead of the presidential elections in March 2002. The group is reported to have said:

> The early warning signs for politicide (mass political killings) and possibly even genocide in Zimbabwe have now reached stage six" which is considered the final. The US and the European Union are reported to have warned President Mugabe that they would use "military intervention if the situation deteriorated further (*Financial Gazette*, 28 February 2002, p5)

Although there was election violence in Zimbabwe to argue that the situation was anywhere near genocide was 'over the top'.

Asked why his paper used such an apocalyptic headline, the Group Editor of *The Financial Gazette,* Sunsley Chamunorwa's response was that:

> We believe that no one should die for any politician. The death of one person is one too many. What we believe at The Financial Gazette is that no politician is worth dying for whatever the circumstances are. The headline "Agency warns of genocide is very appropriate" because two years away from independence there were fears of ethnic cleavage and twelve years from *Gukurahund*i the politics of ethnic superiority is still very high (Sunsley Chamunorwa, Interview 11 May 2015).

[23] "Brutal attack leaves MDC officials in comma" (*Daily News*, 27-02-05, p3), "Zanu (PF) gangs on looting spree"(The Zimbabwe Independent, 18-01-02, p2) "16 die in Zanu (PF) terror campaign"(Daily News 09-02-02,p1), "Zanu (PF) unleashes militia on Byo" (The Financial Gazette, 14-02-02, p2) "Terror squads camp of farms"(The Financial Gazette, 07-02-02, p1-51), and "MDC supporters hacked to death" (Daily News, 01-02-02, p2).

This suggests that *The Financial Gazette* used hyperbolic terms in order to sound alarm bells on the ruling party so as to forestall the worst possible scenarios rather than waiting for the worst to happen, something akin to prevention is better than cure. This is consistent with the classical sense of the watchdog whereby the press becomes some sort of a public sentinel (Norris, 2010). However, it could be argued that raising the spectre of another Rwanda-Burundi was a discursive strategy beyond the realm of the watchdog function as it was a way of instigating a military intervention in Zimbabwe, a familiar trope used by hegemonic powers to meddle in the affairs of sovereign nations. Herald editor Ceasar, Zvayi, sheds some light on the "hidden motives" for which the hyperbolic representation of election violence in the state-owned press and its response to the privately-owned press and the Western media's representation of election violence. He states that:

> *You would find that since the launch of the MDC, as I said it was launched with the support of the powerful Western countries who have always tried to use, for instance the United Nationals system itself to portray Zimbabwe as a case requiring the so-called "Responsibility to Protect", which is chapter seven of the United Nations Charter. So they want to portray Zimbabwe as a country at war, requiring external ah, ah, salvation, external, intervention. So you would find the MDCs would be crying Wolf every time, "People are being beaten, government is sending the army and the police on innocent citizens", and they will try to put to and raise the spectre of Gukurahundi, you know the clashes between the Shonas and the Ndebeles, in the, soon after independence. So they always try to raise the tribal card and try to create a siege mentality. So we face that situation where, whenever, the MDCs cry Wolf we try as much as possible to find out if really they would have seen a Wolf and most of the time we find out that they grandstand for the external gallery so that they justify their..., because they receive a lot of funding over the years to depose Zanu (PF). They would want to justify the electoral outcome saying that Zanu (PF) has closed democratic space, there is no way we can win a free and fair election. So they always try to cry Wolf, always try to, to them they don't care how they come to power, whether through illegal regime change or legal regime change, whether military intervention by Westerners to overthrow the government like what happened in Libya, they don't care. What they want is to come to power so that they justify the millions of dollars that they have received over the years* (Ceasar Zvayi, Interview 07 May 2015).

Tendi (2013, 833) seems to agree that the threats of military intervention in Zimbabwe by the British were not necessarily unfounded. Tendi cites Field Marshal Lord Charles Guthrie who was Chief of General Staff and a professional head in the British army between 1994 and 1997 who confirms that he was asked by the British government to consider invading Zimbabwe but refused. He says "I was absolutely dead set against it because it is a very difficult military operation…My strong recommendation was do not touch Zimbabwe" (Tendi 2013, 833).

In June 2004 the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair admitted that his government was working with the opposition MDC to effect regime change in Zimbabwe. Blair said:

> We work closely with the MDC on the measures that we should take in respect of Zimbabwe, although I am afraid that these measures and sanctions, although we have them in place, are of limited effect on the Mugabe regime. We must be realistic about that. It is still important that we give every chance to, and make every effort to try to help those in the southern part of Africa to put more pressure for change on the Mugabe regime, because there is no salvation for the people of Zimbabwe until that regime is changed (Grebe, cited in Moyo 2014, 42)

Although the private press did not explicitly endorse military intervention in Zimbabwe the use of hyperbole and the projection of election violence through the prism of a liberal human rights frame resonated with the regime change discourse.

Private press journalists pursue the watchdog function with a great measure of zeal, but uncritically. A senior editor at Alpha Media Holdings, the publishers of News Day, The Zimbabwe Independent and The Standard newspapers said:

> Basically, our editorial policy is that we are operating as a private news organisation, our role; we see it as a public watchdog. This is what we do but in the process we have got to meet particular editorial standards and guidelines.[24]

[24] Interview with Vincent Kahiya (05-09-13)

Dumisani Muleya, who edits *The Zimbabwe Independent* was more forthright and said:

> Let me, let me be very honest with you, because oftentimes newspapers have got something that we represent. We represent fundamental freedoms. We believe in fundamental freedoms. We believe in fundamental freedoms. We believe in open so…in freedom of speech, opening up the democratic space, freedom of enterprise, free market enterprise.[25]

The watchdog function is viewed as unproblematic by the private press. For instance, the over-reliance on NGOs (or civil society) with obvious incestuous relationships to the opposition is one challenge the private press face in their execution of their watchdog function. The other is the presence of "political activists" masquerading as journalists who indiscreetly root for certain political parties-an admission that was made by one journalist as will be shown below.

What is worth noting here is the fact that the representation of elections seems to be informed by divergent values in the sense that, while the private-press accentuates human rights or simply put the imperative to save life by sounding their sirens the state-owned press discourses allude to the safeguarding of the 'national interest' or more appropriately, state interest; the preservation of the Zimbabwean state's sovereignty.

5.3.4 State Sponsored or Spontaneous Violence?

Unlike the state-owned press which largely constructed election violence as spontaneous the private press stressed that election violence was orchestrated by government, state agencies or some other paramilitary force controlled by the state. The army, the police, the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and war veterans of the 1970s liberation struggle were mainly blamed for perpetrating election violence.

[25] Interview with Dumisani Muleya (05-08-13)

However, the private press did not feel obliged to prove their allegations but treated them as common cause. An example of news headlines that indicate orchestration of election violence include: "Mugabe ropes in own troops" (*NewsDay* 23-07-13, p1), "July 31: Army versus people" (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 1207-13, p1), "Police fire shots, teargas at Tsvangirai convoy (*Daily News*, 23-02-02, 2) and "Soldiers assault MDC activist for putting up posters" (*Daily News*, 23-02-02, p1). These headlines create the impression that the state security agencies were used as instruments of violence by the state. Reportage on paramilitary groups that allegedly committed violence in the name of the government was more pointed. For instance, a story headlined "Chipangano: An organized criminal network" the *Daily News* (20-07-13) had a feature story on the activities of Chipangano (Shona word for agreement or oath), a quasi-militia group based in the ghetto township of Mbare which claims to have links with the ruling, Zanu (PF)[26]. The newspapers chronicled the group's alleged crimes including murder, robbery, rape, assault and intimidation and stressed that despite its known history of committing atrocities the group had not been brought to book. By stressing its links to the ruling party the *Daily News* sought to project Zanu (PF) as a dishonourable party that harbours criminality in its rank and file. One more point needs to be made about the perception that violence is orchestrated by the state particularly with regard to the army and the police. Owing to its liberation background Zanu (PF) through its leader president Robert Mugabe has effective control over the military (Tendi, 2013). Hence the state security agents are viewed by the opposition as the game changer. Throughout the tenure of the Government of National Unity (GNU) the opposition lobbied for what it called "security sector reforms" albeit without success.

The game changer status of the security sector was partly the reason for the delay in the consummation of the Government of National Unity because the parties could not agree on the sharing of the security ministries. While the MDC's demands for reforms in the security sector were premised on human rights, Zanu (PF) stuck to its position, citing the overarching imperative of national sovereignty.

[26] However Zanu (PF) denied any links with the group. See "Zanu (PF) youths disown Chipangano"(12-05-12)

5.3.5 Escalating or De-escalating Election Violence

Competing narratives on electoral violence also manifested themselves through representation of the level of election violence. While the state-owned press portrayed the best of possible worlds whereby election violence was projected as decreasing the private press almost always constructed election violence as increasing. As election violence increasingly became the exclusive pivot upon which the legitimacy of elections revolved, the state-press was determined to create the impression that violence was decreasing.[27] For instance, on the first of the two polling days in the 2002 presidential elections *The Herald* (08-03-02, p2) published a story which held that "only five cases of political violence were reported countrywide indicating that there will be peace and tolerance as people vote…today and tomorrow".

The phrases only "five cases" suggests that there were probably more cases of violence expected, an indication that the newspaper was trying to sanitize if not 'normalise' the abnormal. This story did not say anything about cases of electoral violence which may have been perpetrated since the beginning of the election campaign. This type of sanitization of electoral violence takes place through omission whereby the uninitiated reader will end up forming unrealistic impressions about the level of election violence.

Apart from omission sanitization of election violence also takes the form of rationalization whereby a person tries to proffer "good" reasons why there was very little election violence. In the example given above, the spokesperson of the police (the only source in the story) waxes lyrical about Zimbabweans being "peace loving" people who "would not want to plunge the country into chaos by perpetrating violence". The police spokesperson goes on to give an account of the five cases of election violence and predictably in all the cases the victims were Zanu (PF) supporters while the perpetrators were all MDC supporters. Although this could not possibly have been true, noteworthy is the currency of selectivity whereby the state-owned press sought to suppress certain facts while amplifying others thereby constructing a particular version of events.

[27] Examples of headlines which suggest this include: "Political violence on the decrease"(The Herald, 04-01-2000, p1), "Political violence decreases"(The Herald, 06-06-2000, p1), "Violence on decrease"(The Sunday Mail, 28-05-2000, p4), political violence declines" (The Herald, 08-03-02, 2) "Political violence continues to decline"(The Herald 05-02-02, p4) "Political violence cases continue to decline, say police"(The Herald, 19-06-08, p1).

5.3.6 Optimism, Legitimacy and Official Sources

The de-escalation of election violence discourse in the state-owned press was underpinned by an optimistic narrative which found expression through trite statements and standard public relations rhetoric such as the "police were winning the fight against political violence" (*The Herald*, 06-06-2000, p1) or that the police's "anti-violence campaign was beginning to bear fruit" (*The Herald*, 26-02-2000, p1), and "police had managed to quell political violence through roadblocks and awareness campaigns"(*The Sunday Mail*, 28-05-2000, p5).

Such statements were meant to undercut perceptions in the private press that the electoral environment was untenable, an argument that was used by the opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai to pull out of the presidential run-off election in June 2008. Although Tsvangirai's withdrawal came very late the actual reasons for the withdrawal are debatable. It is however, incontrovertible that the opposition used it as a political bargaining chip in order to morally weaken the ruling party or to deter it from employing unorthodox means to win elections since this would taint its international image (Tendi 2014, 1268). This shows that election violence was instrumentalized for gaining as well as retaining political power.

The state-owned press relied on official sources, primarily the police to prove that violence was declining. Police were dutifully quoted pontificating on why election violence was decreasing. For instance, one week after the 2008 presidential run-off *The Herald* (19-06-08, p1) published a front page story headlined political violence cases decline".

A police spokesperson was quoted refuting claims by the MDC that four of its supporters "had been killed in Harare". The police spokesperson attributed the "decline" in election violence to the efficacy of police campaigns which had "managed to persuade party supporters to desist from violence and tolerate each other". This way, the police became the primary definers of reality in the construction of public discourse (Matthews 2013, 297) around election violence.

Projecting election violence as declining was meant to harness the goodwill of the internal and external public, particularly election observers. The problem, however, was that the responsibility to define reality and "establish the boundaries of public discourse" was differed to the police and yet the police alleged to be biased in favour of the ruling party.

Scholars have lamented the press's obsession with official sources or institutions that wield power in society who then draw the boundaries for knowledge and discourse (Matthews 2013, 278). The over-dependency on police sources came out clearly during conversations with state-press journalists and editors. A reporter who reported on all the elections under study had this to say:

> I think one of my main sources were the police. Then apart from the police, the different candidates of political parties, be they council, MPS, e-eh, even party structures, both from within Zanu (PF) and MDC. E-eh, and then apart from that we also have some other people from different residential areas. They would just phone you if they have your number. So you would find on the desk a message saying something of this nature has happened come and cover this, and that has been very important. Then as I said before, you then have to verify with the police even if you went there you saw what happened, then you get the official figures, the facts from the police. (J2)

The reporter's view was corroborated by William Chikoto, the Executive Editor of *The Sunday Mail* who said that:

> *Well again, when it comes to the issue of violence, eh, for you to credibly report on it you really have to base it on what has been reported, especially what has been recorded by the police, so our reporting, you are quoting the police, what are they saying? Are they saying how many incidents of violence have been committed, how many arrests have been made? So if there are those statistics that then say this is the level of violence that is there isusu (us) as newspapers of record we want to go by that. But our other colleagues, ah, when we say we are reporting again what we are seeing, what is there, there is violence there, eh; again you have extremes like the case of the Magunje woman who was allegedly decapitated, things that did not happen. So there is that danger of going with what the political parties are saying, your civil rights bodies are saying, they are saying this that and yet you do not have the proof yourself. So there is that danger of exaggerating. And there is also danger on our side if you just go by what the police are saying.*

> *There is also the danger of them, eh, under-reporting* (Interview with William Chikoto, 11 May 2015, Harare).

The fact that the police always have the last word on election violence stories sits awkwardly against the dictates of independent journalism. It implies that the police exercise a significant amount of power on electoral violence discourses. This presents a dilemma to the state press journalists particularly in a context where the memory of violence and residual fear may constitute an obstacle for victims of political violence to open up about their experiences. The researcher's conversations with state press journalists are revealing in this regard:

> *I remember there was the Headlands incident in 2008, where people, a whole village lost homes. There was an accusation that MDC was saying its Zanu (PF), then Zanu (PF) saying its MDC. We actually had problems trying to come to terms with who had actually done it. We ended up relying on having to go to the police and the police accused MDC. But you could see when you talked some of the victims that they were victims from MDC. There were victims who said they were aligned Zanu (PF), it was sort of a reprisal, the attack was on Zanu (PF). That gave us a lot of problems. So we ended up just having to listen to what the police were had supp…said, the official investigation* (J2).

By deferring to the police to authenticate the veracity of incidents of election violence state press journalists abdicate their power to assert their versions of reality on public discourses around election violence. This implies discourses on election violence were a negotiated outcome between the official version constructed by the police and the editorial processing by the state media journalists.

5.3.7 Ambiguous Morality

Although the dominant discourse on the level of election violence in the state press portrayed election violence as decreasing there were a few instances where the state press projected election violence as increasing. In such circumstances the MDC was exclusively blamed for the spiraling "terror" and the victims would be Zanu (PF) supporters. Examples of headlines which suggest this are: "Politically motivated violence starts to rise" (*The Herald,* 06-02-02, p4), "Another Zanu (PF) member murdered" (*The Herald,* 16-06-08, p1), "Two more Zanu (PF) supporters murdered" (*The Herald,* 13-06-08, p1).

Such stories chronicled *ad infinitum* the MDC's increasing "terror campaign" (*The Sunday Mail*, 24-02-02, p4), the MDC's "new wave of terror" (*The Herald*, 02-02-02, p4) or some other acts of treachery by the opposition party. There was a significant amount of editorialising whereby the MDC was warned to desist from acts of violence.

For example, ten days before the 2008 presidential run-off *The Herald's* lead was headlined "President warns MDC-T: This wave of violence must stop" (*The Herald*, 17-06-08, p1). The newspaper reported that president Mugabe had warned the MDC that government would hold them vicariously responsible for the orgy of organised violence that had rocked some parts of the country". President Mugabe was addressing a campaign rally in the resort tourist town of Kariba when he made the statement. He is reported to have told the gathering that:

> There is a definite plan of violence, an organised system of violence aimed at disturbing law and order. Let them be warned that we will invoke what is known as vicarious responsibility and liability which means we will hold them responsible for the violence across the country (*The Herald*, 17 June, 2008, p1).

In a strongly worded editorial *The Sunday Mail* (07-06-08, p1) warned the MDC to "stop its barbaric campaign of arson, destroying and harming people, destroying lives". While the MDC was singled out as the primary culprit the newspaper blamed an 'invisible third force' or "some gremlins strategically planted to compromise the credibility of the June 27 run-off". By blaming an unknown force for election violence meant that election violence discourse coalesced into the realm of myths. The newspaper added that the opposition and its western allies were bent on "creating the impression that Zanu (PF) was responsible for all politically motivated violence in Zimbabwe. Even deaths due to natural causes are sometimes beamed as political murders by the international media to discredit Zanu (PF)" (*The Sunday Mail*, 7 June, 2008, p1).

While there is some credence to the view that the opposition and its media allies used election violence as a tool to discredit the electoral process through exaggerations and half-truths it was not correct to say that the MDC perpetrated all the violence. While Zanu (PF) blamed the MDC for the escalating violence the MDC claimed that over 200 of its supporters had been killed in the run up to the 27 June 2008 presidential election run-off thus giving rise to antagonistic narratives.

As election violence itself became the battleground for power with either political and its press constructing versions of reality that advanced its own political agenda. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 7 when the truth became the first casualty it became impossible to rely on a newspaper for news and information. This has serious implications for democracy.

5.3.8 Anonymous Sources

One distinct feature of election violence stories in the state-owned press was their reliance on unmanned sources. For example, *The Sunday Mail* (10-02-02, p1-4) had a story headlined "MDC plans pre-election country-wide terror" which alleged that the MDC was planning a terror campaign through-out the whole country in the run-up to the 2002 presidential election. The paper claimed that the motive for the terror campaign was to give election observers the impression that the election had not been peaceful. The entire story was based on an unmanned "MDC legislator who spoke to *The Sunday Mail* on condition of anonymity". The so-called MDC legislator was quoted as having said that the MDC' objective was "to create the impression that the campaign period is not peaceful so that the election observers will declare that the elections were not free and fair". He added that "we definitely have a problem in the party. You see our chances of winning in the presidential election are fading with every passing day and the leadership thinks we have to find a way of making sure that the results are nullified" (*The Sunday Mail*, 10 February, 2002, p4). Here is a supposedly "very authoritative source" who goes to a great length to expose the strategy of their party to the opponent under the cover of anonymity. Although the opposition would have itched to see the elections tainted through whatever means, fair or foul, using anonymous sources became the fodder for constructing opaque discourses through which the real perpetrators of election violence would be absolved.

5.4 Escalating Violence Discourse

Unlike the state press which projected election violence as declining, the private press consistently portrayed violence as escalating, if not spiraling out of control.[28] To a great extent the private press engaged in "body counting" whereby the death toll due to election violence was portrayed as progressively rising but "there is nothing which is being done" about it. Statistics of people who had been allegedly killed by Zanu (PF) or state security agents were routinely bandied around. Examples include:

- "…more than 10 people died since voting ended" (*Daily News*, 23-03-02, p4).
- "..the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) says more than 100 of its supporters have been murdered by pro-government militias since February 2000" (*The Financial Gazette*, 14-03-02, p7).
- "…twenty-eight people have died in election campaign related violence since February (*Daily News*, 12-06-2000, p10).
- Political violence after Zimbabwe's presidential election has killed at least six people; human rights groups reported this week" (*The Financial Gazette*, 21-03-02, p6).
- At least 40 MDC supporters were murdered before and during the ballot" (*The Financial Gazette*, 17-02-02, p6)
- "Police yesterday said only 11 people had been killed despite overwhelming evidence of at least 26 people who have perished in the disturbances"(*Daily News*, 31-05-2000, p2)

[28] Examples of headlines which show this are: "Terror spreads as door-to-door poll campaign starts" (The Financial Gazette, 18-05-2000, p1), "As rural violence mounts CIO, ZNA join farm invasions" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 06-07-2000) "2 MDC supporters killed as violence continues" (Daily News, 16-03-02, p2), "Norwegian observers say violence on the increase in Zimbabwe"(Daily News, 25-03-02, p18), "Zanu (PF) intensifies onslaught on MDC" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 15-02-02, p2) "Renewed fear grips farming sector" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 22-03-02, p4), "Terror spreads despite peace calls" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 25-01-02, p2), "Terror spreads" (Daily News, 01-03-02, p1), "Fears of violence rises as Zanu (PF) sets up bases at polling stations" (Daily News, 08-03-02, p2), "3 MDC supporters, farmer killed in fresh terror" (Daily News, 19-03-02, p2), "Zanu (PF) widens terror campaign" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 18-01-02, p1), "Violence on the increase" (Daily News, 12-02-02, p2), "Zanu (PF) fires teachers as terror spreads"(Daily News, 11-02-02, p2), "MDC says assaults on supporters on the increase in Manicaland"(Daily News, 08-02-02, p14).

- "More than 40 people were killed in the parliamentary election" (*Daily News*, 11-02-02, p6).

- "Ford's murder this week takes the toll of slain commercial farmers to 10 since farm invasions began in 2000" (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 22-03-02, p2).

While the real motive of using these figures may have been to give the stories a modicum of authenticity their sources were not usually revealed as much as the figures given by the police were. By using unauthenticated statistics of people killed during election violence the privately-owned press suffered from the very same transgression that they accused the police of.

The private press dutifully chronicled alleged cases of election violence in order to demonstrate that the situation was getting out of hand. For instance, the first few paragraphs of a story in *The Zimbabwe Independent* (25-01-2002, p2) headlined "Terror spreads despite peace talks" opened thus:

> Electoral violence intensified this week spreading from Mashonaland Central to Mashonaland west where scores of opposition Movement for Democratic Change supporters have been attacked. The current wave of attacks on MDC members began on December 18 and has continued despite calls for peace and calm by Zanu (PF) leaders this week.

The rest of the story is a lurid account of the incidences of election violence in which all the victims are MDC and the perpetrators Zanu (PF). Some of the victims were given a long leash to relate their ordeals with one of them claiming that "I lost all my property as my huts were burnt, grain was looted and property worth more than $10000 was destroyed". The private press relied on 'human rights organisations' and also voiced the victims of violence and emphasized the desperate human condition arising from the election violence in order to wring the sympathy of the readers.

It was apparent that news about election violence in the privately-owned press was not only meant for the consumption of the local audience but also for readers beyond the borders of Zimbabwe.

The internationalised status of the Zimbabwean political situation and the human rights frame deployed by the private press in their representation of election violence implied that western countries, primarily Britain and the United States of America were expected rein-in President Mugabe for alleged 'crimes against humanity' and the private press came sought construct a certain version of reality to justify such an intervention. *The Zimbabwe Independent* (18-01-02, p1) acknowledges this as much.

The newspaper claimed that the escalating violence by the ruling party was Mugabe's act of defiance against "western governments led by the United States" who were calling for the restoration of law to ensure the build-up to the polls was fair". By projecting the election as escalating the private press sought to bring the Zanu (PF) government into the spotlight for possible censure by the 'international community'. Such a task resonated with the private press's avowal to the liberal human rights framework which places premium on the protection of individual rights. Haines (2009, 482) notes that the responsibility to protect doctrine which justifies military intervention in any country on humanitarian grounds has been frequently referred to in relation to Sudan and Zimbabwe. Haines, however, hazards that the doctrine has been "couched in terms and applied to situations for which the original conception was not designed" (Haines 2009, 483-484) suggesting that the principle might have been abused.

Although the private press did not explicitly agitate for military intervention, their appeals to the international community "to do something" about the situation could be interpreted as a call for military intervention. Their insistence that violence was 'escalating' even when it was not and the obsession with death tolls demonstrate their framing of election violence as a human rights disaster warranting external intervention. Private press journalists appear to justify their cynicism by arguing that they were simply reflecting the prevailing situation at the material time.

Group Editor at the Financial Gazette, Sunsley Chamunorwa said:

> These headlines (depicting violence as escalating) are quite appropriate because at the material time the authorities were not in control of anything. We also believe that peace does not mean the absence of war. Our skepticism derives from the fact that in spite of calls for election violence to end, there was a lot of violence and lawlessness...If you check you will find that in the late 1990s, we had some opposition parties like ZUM but you will find that the violence was not that much relative to those elections held after the formation of the most formidable opposition party to Zanu (PF) rule; the MDC. The violence in previous elections was unprecedented. From 2002, 2005 it escalated. You will find that there has been a correlation between Zanu (PF) rulership and violence (Sunsley Chamunorwa, Interview, 11 May 2015, Harare).

Chamunorwa's sentiment is echoed by two other private-press editors, namely Dumisani Muleya, the editor of The Zimbabwe Independent and the founding editor of the Daily News, Geoff Nyarota. Like Chamunorwa, Muleya stated that:

> At the material time that you are showing some of these stories (the news headlines that I was showing him from the Zimbabwe Independent) that was the height of the violence. Come 2013 election, you won't see any stories about violence, you see stories about other problems but electoral violence was absent, therefore it was absent from our pages (Dumisani Muleya, Interview, 11 May 2015, Harare).

The objectivist view of the privately owned press in relation to electoral violence implies that private press journalists view themselves as neutral, as simply 'covering' election violence, rather than constructing 'competing explanations of reality' (Street 2001, 33) or alternative versions of reality that can be challenged. This is clearly demonstrated by Geoff Nyarota when he says that:

> Journalists are not in the business of creating news or creating the circumstances. In the case of ah, ah, election coverage it is the politicians, it is the political party followers who are responsible…I was the founding editor of the Daily News. I know, I know why we created this newspaper. I know more than anybody else. What motivated me after being fired from *The Chronicle* for telling the truth was to start a paper that would tell the people of Zimbabwe the truth as it unfolds.

As stated earlier the *Daily News's* and by extension the privately-owned press's philosophy of telling the "truth as it is" finds expression in an adversarial brand of journalism pivoted on a singular truth. This is at odds with the views of scholars like John Street who reject such essentialism.

> News is a media product, and like all such products it is the result of a complex process of history…in representing a version of the world, news has first to persuade us of its veracity through the use of various techniques, and secondly, the character and role of that news have to be seen as circumscribed by wider commercial and political processes.

The argument advanced in this chapter is that entrenched views about what is truth and what it is not reflect the competing ideological values between the state-owned press and the privately-owned press at the material time. Such irreconcilable clash of values could have possibly contributed to the propagation of anti-democratic practices.

5.4.1 Over-reliance on NGO Sources

An overwhelming majority of the stories which claimed that election violence was escalating were based on information supplied by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOS), opposition politicians and the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) who in most instances are uncritically quoted. For example, *The Financial Gazette* (21-03-02, p6) had a story headlined "Violence dogs Zimbabwe as six die after poll" in which "human rights groups" and opposition party officials" were reported saying politically motivated violence had worsened since the March 9-10 presidential elections. An Amnesty International official was quoted at length confirming that violence was escalating. The official claimed that:

> As many of the international observers leave (Zimbabwe), Amnesty International fears that opposition supporters, members of non-governmental organisations, employees of the independent press and other perceived opponents of the government are at risk, both immediately and in the event of any popular protest against the election results (*The Financial Gazette*, 21 March, 2002, p6).

It is trite to say that the prophesied clampdown on non-governmental organisations and the independent press never came to pass. On the basis of perceptions that election violence was spiraling out of control Zimbabwe has been accustomed to speculations of another 'looming' Rwanda-Burundi scenario. Such speculations fed into the private press's exhortations of the international community to act 'before another Rwanda-Burundi' happened. Furthermore, uncritically depending on NGOs and opposition politicians bred an incestuous relationship between the private press and their sources which compromises the press's role to enrich democracy. For instance, in a story headlined "Renewed fear grips farming sector" *The Zimbabwe Independent* (22-03-02, p2) reported that fear had gripped the commercial farming sector due to a worsening "terror campaign to force farmers off their land". More than half of the story is based on direct quotes from an official of the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) and there is no other voice to counterbalance the information from this official.

Although *The Zimbabwe Independent* was skeptical about information from government sources the newspaper was more than willing to be led by the nose by its NGO sources. In a story headlined "Police say only 11 people killed in violence" the *Daily News* (31-05-2000, p2) refuted police claims that only 11 people had been killed in the run-up to the 2002 presidential election campaign but was more pliant in accepting the MDC's claim that the figure was more than 26 people. The *Daily News* went on to quote five non-state and western funded NGOS (namely the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZIMRIGHTS), the Non-Governmental Organisation Forum, Amani Trust, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) all of which disagreed with the police figure, but also went on to allege that Zanu (PF) and not MDC was the perpetrator of election violence. As a matter of fact one of the NGOs, Amani Trust was described as "an experienced violence monitoring group" in order to give legitimacy to its election violence statistics. This shows that reality is purposefully constructed to achieve political objectives. By relying on NGO sources the private press saturated public discourses amplified perceptions of election violence.

One journalist at *The Zimbabwe Independent* confirmed that some of their NGO sources are prone to exaggerating the levels of election violence. She said:

> Some of these sources, eh, especially exaggeration, that's where I have got a problem because they could, they maybe deliberately misinform. For me I think it's a big eh, because they know that we don't have the resources sometimes to go and check. That makes it, eh…so we got to a stage where and I think if you look at, in terms of the reports that we are getting, unlike the way we reported in 2000, 2002 whatever came would be in the paper. If you look at …there was a shift. If you look at this past…especially these elections where we were not taking whatever we were getting as fact. (J4).

This clearly shows that some of the private press reports on election violence are negatively influenced by the ideologies of their sources who are Non-Governmental Organisations. Institutional constraints such as lack of resources to verify incidence of election violence in different parts of the country puts journalists at the mercy of these sources, thereby negatively compromising their ability to exercise their democratic functions as primary definers of reality by abdicating their agenda-setting function to parties that have their own agendas. It is, however, noteworthy to state that the prevalence of discourses on escalation of political violence was never uniform for all the elections selected for this study but was contingent upon a variety of factors such as presence of election observers and popular perceptions.

Where election violence was perceived to be low such as the 2005 and 2013 elections the discourse was less focused on physical violence and more on psychological violence and the resuscitation of memories of election violence (Nyambi 2014, 1). The press used psychological violence in order to secure the support of the electorate (Tendi 2013) through residual fear, what Zamchiya refers to as "the harvest of fear" (Zamchiya 2013, 960) a theme which will be revisited in the next chapter. The next section turns to the third and last theme to be discussed in this chapter; the representation of election violence through a lens of order and disorder.

5.5 Authority-Disorder Discourse on Election Violence

The preceding section alludes to the fact that the major motive behind the private press's framing of election violence as escalating was to create the impression that there was a total break-down of law and order in Zimbabwe and that the centre could no longer hold.

Machin (2008, 76) rightly points out that "news likes to frame things in terms of threats, such as to social order, to democracy, to our children etc. even when these things themselves are part of complex social changes or political situations". Machin's statement holds true in relation to the manner in which the press in Zimbabwe represented election violence during the period under study.

5.5.1 The Authority Discourse

While the state-owned press projected the state as being in control of the situation the private press portrayed the state as losing control. The state-owned press's law and order discourse was bolstered by a number of stories focused on police blitz on perpetrators of election violence, increased police deployments and publicity campaigns against election violence by the police and a host of other measures put in place to deal with political violence.[29]

News reports focused on police "blitz" on perpetrators of political violence (*The Herald*, 15-03-02, p4) laws to curb political violence (*The Herald*, 25-01-02, p4) tightening of security (*The Herald*, 08-05-2000, p8) and banning "dangerous weapons"(*The Herald* 20-02-08, p1) and arms (*The Sunday Mail*, 24-02-02, p4).

When a security law, the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) was passed in 2002, *The Herald* (16-02-02, p4) published a story quoting police spokesperson Assistant Commissioner Wayne Bvudzijena who claimed that the law would help police to effectively deal "with perpetrators of political violence and public disorder".

[29] Examples of headlines in the state press include: "Matabeleland South police on alert for political violence" (The Herald, 15-03-02, p4), "450 nabbed in blitz on political violence"(The Herald, 03-05-2000, p1) "Police deployed countrywide to ensure post-poll calm"(The Herald, 27-06-2000, p1), "Supporters of political parties warned" (The Herald, 25-02-02, 2), "Police bans arms possession" (The Sunday Mail, 24-02-02, p4), "Ban on carrying of weapons" (The Herald, 13-02-02, p4), "Security tightened after bomb blast last month" (The Herald, 05-2000, p8), "State warns against violence"(the Herald, 11-03-08, p1), "Police ban dangerous weapons" (the Herald, 10-06-08, p4), "Police step up war against violence"(The Herald, 26-02-08, p1-2), "Blitz on political violence nets 13" (The Herald, 21-02-08, p1-2), "Act will aid fight against terrorism" (The Herald, 25-01-02, p4), "25 magistrates to handle political violence cases"(The Herald 16-07-13, p1). "Cops assure Sadc observers of peaceful election" (The Herald, 23-07-13, p4) and "There will be heavy police presence during elections" (the Herald, 12-07-13, p2).

The police Commissioner reportedly said that cases of political violence "continued to decrease as the country draws closer to the March 9 and 10 presidential elections", implying that there was a correlation between the promulgation of the Act and political stability. Projecting the controversial law as beneficial to the nation was meant to moderate the inundation of criticism directed at the law by the opposition who described it as 'draconian'. The story in question did not say anything about this criticism particularly allegations that it restricted individual civil liberties. This shows that in its representation of election violence the state-owned press accentuated state interests ahead of individual civil liberties.

Similarly, before the 31 March harmonised elections and the 27 June presidential run-off in 2008 the police issued warnings to the public that they would not hesitate to use "the full might of the law" (a veiled reference to shoot to kill) in dealing with political "malcontents". Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri reported "we will not hesitate to use full force including fire arms to quell politically motivated violence before, during and after" the elections. He added that:

> The use of full force by the police the world over has always attracted criticism and is deliberately exaggerated most of the times for a purpose. This is a sticky point so designed to undermine and discredit the entire electoral process. We are not deterred by the utterances of hate from the Western World concerning these issues as it is in their interest to discredit all who are not their puppets in their quest to defend their interests (*The Herald,* 27 February 2008, p1).

Although Chinhuri was talking about the police's intention to use the full force of law against perpetrators of political violence (which is ordinarily an acceptable thing), some critics argued that his statement went beyond the realm of policing in the sense that his reference to "Western world" and "puppets" was viewed as partisan thus undermining the ability of the police force to enforce law and order. Furthermore, the statement rationalises the use of force against a particular group by engaging in philosophical generalities (i.e. "the world over" and "a sticky point").

On the one hand Chihuri's statement could be interpreted as an attempt by the police to assert their authority. On the other, it could be read as a veiled warning to MDC supporters, who before the harmonised elections in 2008 were reportedly planning demonstrations if the elections were rigged after the then party spokesperson, Nelson Chamisa threatened to resort to "Kenyan-style" demonstrations if the 2008 harmonised elections were rigged.

Chamisa is reported to have told a gathering of his party's supporters that "you saw and heard what happened in Kenya. Its nothing compared to what we have here if (President) Mugabe rigs the election) (*The Herald*, 27-02-08, p4). Chamisa was referring to the violence which broke out in Kenya after the 2007 elections in which over 1000 people died and 500 000 others were displaced (BBC World Service Trust 2008, 2). Chihuri further warned that:

> It is time for political parties to own up when they lose. Machete, axes, bows and arrows cannot put anybody into office. We will never allow it to happen in this country. We will nip it in the bud. We are adequately resourced to cover this election (*The Herald*, 27 February 2008, p4).

Chihuri's warning was ominous and couched in violent language and could have possibly had a chilling effect on members of the public and the media. While the opposition's threats to stage Kenyan style demonstrations is clearly anti-democratic, *The Herald* failed to critique police insistence that there was law and order in the country particularly against the backdrop of widespread allegations by the opposition and their civil society alliances that the police applied the law selectively.

The state-owned press's tacit endorsement of the state's crackdown on election violence was meant to counter private press claims that there was no law and order in the country since not doing so would imply that the electoral environment was not conducive for the holding of free and fair elections. Hence reports on police blitz on election violence often stressed the number of people arrested or those languishing in jail. It also emphasized that police were well prepared to deal with members of the public who violate the law (for example in *The Herald*, 12-07-13, 2). Thus, police visibility, deployments, the banning of traditional weapons; indictments of perpetrators enactment of laws such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) were constructed as evidence of vigilance by the police vigilance in quelling possible threats to national security.

The state-owned press vigorously stated that the police were ever ready to stamp out anarchy and the claim that the police would "never treat perpetrators of violence with kid gloves" was often reiterated at every opportunity available (*The Herald*, 01-02-08, p1-8, *The Herald*, 27-02-08, p1). *The Herald*'s endorsement of the law and order discourse, regardless of the violent subtext in such a discourse implies that the newspaper endorsed the state's legitimate monopoly to violence at the expense of individual human rights.

In order to deflect the criticism that the law was being selectively applied, the moral equivalence trope was conveniently retrieved and "police statistics" depicting equal culpability for election violence between MDC and Zanu (PF) were routinely quoted. For instance, *The Herald* (09-06-08, p1) claimed that "In some provinces it was almost 50-50 with both parties (MDC and Zanu (PF)) violating the law".

When the Attorney General's Office announced that it would no longer grant bail to all suspects arrested on charges of election related violence a few weeks before the June 27, 2008 presidential run-off *The Herald* hailed the move and uncritically describing it as a "progressive decision" which would "go a long way in deterring the election violence" (*The Herald*, 10-06-08, p4).

The newspaper also cynically added that "…the decision to lock all perpetrators is bound to enforce tolerance and peace ahead of the presidential run-off". That this decision possibly violated the constitutional rights of the detained was not an issue for *The Herald* implying that the newspaper subordinated individual human rights to the state.

The imperative by the state-press to construct a narrative of the state to assert its authority is succinctly illustrated in a commentary in *The Herald* (11-05-2000) which stated that:

> Zimbabwe has a powerful government that works. Its power is pervasive and ubiquitous and can be felt in every corner of the country, through structures, like the civil service and the police. Warnings by Mr. Tsvangirai's cheerleaders that the country was descending into chaos date back to the days Mr. Tsvangirai led the ZCTU into violent strikes and stayaways. It was then that he introduced violence to Zimbabwe in an orgy of destruction, looting and burning.

The Herald sought to debunk perceptions in public discourses that the Zimbabwean state was collapsing by emphasizing the ubiquity of its bureaucratic and coercive authority. However, the emphasis placed on the state's power betrayed its lack of confidence in the face of mounting economic and political challenges. Predatory tendencies epitomised by the heavy handed approach in dealing with internal dissenting voices also demonstrate the gradual flagging of the state's ideological and consensus-building power.

5.5.2 The Disorder Discourse

Unlike the state press which foregrounded the state's ability to maintain order during electoral periods the private press constructed elections, the electoral environment as disorderly. The disorder frame was sustained through the salience on alleged human rights abuses and the breakdown of civilian authority while at the same time privileging the liberal human rights trope. The arraignment of perpetrators of violence was constructed as human rights violations rather than an ability by the state to enforce law and order.

For instance, the *News Day* (12-07-13, p5) described people who had been arrested for pulling down President Mugabe's posters during the 2013 harmonised elections as "seeing red" and the Electoral Act under which these people had been detained was described as "an obnoxious piece of legislation" meaning that the arrests were illegal. Such descriptive phrases engendered the notion that people are illegally persecuted.

The arrests themselves were described as a "clampdown" implying that this was not a just application but an abuse of the law. The implication for this is that in the context of Zimbabwean elections considered in this study the meaning of election violence was slippery, shifting and hinged on who invoked it when, where and for what purpose. This is consistent with Stuart Hall's argument that the meaning of objects or concepts "…is never finally fixed. It is always putting off or 'deferring its rendezvous with Absolute truth. It is always being negotiated and inflected to resonate with new situations. It is contested and sometimes bitterly fought over", (Hall 1997, 9).This implies that the press do not necessarily abhor election violence but may be concerned about who reaps the benefits from its use since election violence becomes a medium for appropriating or retaining power. In the specific context of this thesis, the press sought to distribute, power through discourses of legitimation and de-legitimation, a discussion that will be revisited in greater detail in the next chapter.

5.5.3 Election violence and land occupations

The occupation of white-owned commercial farms by war veterans of the 1970s Chimurenga war and "land hungry" peasants which began after a constitutional amendment in February 2000 and continued with varying degrees of intensity through the 2000 general and the 2002 presidential elections lent itself to the construction of discourses of disorder in the private press.[30] Phrases in these headlines such as "invasions", "evicted", "fleeing", "hostage", "force", "seizure" and "threatens" invoke criminality while words such as "militia" connote a civilian authority that has been displaced by paramilitary rule. White commercial farmers were projected as being under siege and the impression was given that the government through various state security arms was condoning violence rather than curbing it.

[30] Examples of such headlines include: "Farmer held hostage" (Daily News, 23-03-02, p13), "Zanu (PF) supporters hold farmer hostage"(Daily News, 21-03-02, p18), "Commercial farmers flee to Mozambique"(Daily News, 09-03-02, p3), "Zanu (PF) unleashes militias on commercial farms" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 15-05-02, p2), "War veterans force tobacco farmers to sell their crops"(The Financial Gazette, 18-05-2000, p1), "Seizure of farms begins"(The Financial Gazette, 29-07-2000, p1), "Invasions: Schools forced to close" (The Financial Gazette, 11-05-2000, p39), "CIO, ZNA join farm invasions"(The Zimbabwe Independent, 13-07-2000, p1), "Border Timbers shuts down operations"(Daily News, 18-05-2000, p1), "Zanu (PF) unleashes militias on commercial farms" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 15-05-02, p3), "Mugabe threatens fresh farm invasions"(Daily News, 12-06-06-2000, p1) and "100 framers evicted ahead of poll"(The Financial Gazette, 07-03-02, p34).

Some scholars have argued that the unprecedented attention given to the plight of the white commercial farmers in the private press was mainly to do with their economic power and their ethnic links with the former colonial master, Britain (Willems, 2005). Portraying white commercial farms as under serious threat served to amplify narrative about "rampant human rights abuses" during elections. However, saturating public discourse with the victimhood of white commercial farmers marginalised other dimensions of human rights such as the rights of the black peasants who had a legitimate right to land ownership. Since lawlessness was constructed as "state sponsored" the remedy prescribed to restore order was that the government must act. President Mugabe was singled out as being responsible for the breakdown in the law. Similarly, it was reasoned that "Mugabe must do something". In a commentary headlined "Only Mugabe can end violence" the *Daily News* (18-05-2000, p6) stated that since Mugabe had "condoned the invasion of white-owned commercial farms and virtually ordered the police not to intervene many people believed Mugabe had decided to suspend the rule of law in the country". According to the *Daily News* Mugabe was singularly liable for the breakdown in law and order. The newspaper further stated that:

> If Mugabe genuinely loves his country and believes that it is important than his own survival, then we have no doubt that he will make every effort to end the violence which, for the moment makes a pipe dream the prospect of a free and fair election.

The argument that Mugabe alone could restore sanity to the country rehashes the narrative on the instrumentalisation of election violence discussed earlier, but also brings to the fore the privately-owned press's assumption that there is a correlation between election violence and the freeness and fairness of elections. However, the portraying Mugabe as solely responsible for election violence was an oversimplification that precluded the private press from viewing election violence in a broader context. Willems (2005, 100) contends that:

> **..**by presenting Mugabe as the "bad guy" solely responsible for the crisis in Zimbabwe, the media failed to contextualise the situation and failed to take into account more externally related factors which have also contributed to the catastrophic situation in the economic situation in Zimbabwe…

The view that election violence was a responsibility of one individual sharply contradicts my findings from my conversations with ordinary Zimbabwean citizens (see Chapter Seven) the majority of whom do not believe that election violence in Zimbabwe is one-sided let alone the responsibility of one person. However, the personalisation of election violence absolved the private press from tackling the multiple facets of election violence while at the same time justifying external intervention in Zimbabwe. However, contradictory discourses emerged in the private press in the sense that attributing all the blame for election violence to Mugabe and suggesting that he alone held the key to the restoration of law and order created the impression of an omnipotent and pervasive Mugabe. This narrative contradicted allegations that Mugabe had lost total control of the state as he had abdicated power to paramilitary structures, the upshot of which was that Mugabe had literally become a pawn of the securocrats.

News headlines that accentuate Mugabe's agency include "Mugabe orders 'war-like' campaign" (*The Zimbabwe Independent,* 23-05-08, p1), "Mugabe ropes in own troops" (*News Day*, 23-07-13, p1). These headlines suggest that Mugabe is still in control of everything. On the contrary, "July 3: Army versus people" (*The Zimbabwe Independent,* 12-07-13, p2), and "Police take charge of poll" (*The Zimbabwe Independent,* 30-05-08, p1) suggest the security agents and not Mugabe were in control of the levers of power. In the Zimbabwe Independent story (12-07-13, p1) a senior army commander reportedly said "As soldiers, we are not ready and will not allow bringing back the whites because they have been calling their friends from outside the country to impose sanctions that are hurting us now". Although the motive for projecting the army in this way was to demonstrate the breakdown in law and order and the absence of human rights the statement is also significant in that it reveals the role of sanctions in promoting election violence.

Some scholars argue that economic sanctions in Zimbabwe have failed to induce democracy and that to the contrary they have provided a scapegoat for the state to clamp down on the citizens while hiding under external forces (Chingono, 2010, 192).

It could also be argued that sanctions were a form of soft violence whose effect was to induce the electorate to reject the incumbent government and its leadership since they were blamed for human rights violations. This view is echoed by acting editor of *The Sunday Mail*, Mabasa Sasa, who says that:

> Our position on sanctions has always been that sanctions are a form of warfare. This is informed by the sanctions that were put on Iraqi before we had any sanctions imposed on us. The sanctions on Iraqi before the first Gulf War killed more people than the war itself did. So the very impositions of sanctions right from the onset on Zimbabwe to us was a declaration of war. Having seen what had happened to Iraq, so right from the onset ah, sanctions were never, a tool to ostensibly create a more democratic environment, ah, to further the interests of human rights groups, so from the onset for us it was a declaration of war, and war by any definition is a very violent thing, ah, umm, attacking our economy is attacking livelihoods of people, and that is extremely violent, ah, emm, blocking access to lines of credit in the global environment that we live in, the global financial architecture we have and blocking us from accessing such things that is a serious form of violence because you are trying to cripple us, you are crippling service delivery, you are crippling food security and that is war (Interview with Mabasa Sasa, 14 May 2015, Harare).

This view is instructive in the sense that viewing sanctions as worse than election violence might have forced *The Sunday Mail* to downplay the human rights dimension of election violence in the spirit of national interest and national sovereignty, particularly given the fact that wars are regarded as higher order threats than domestic problems like election violence.

5.5.4 Public Order, Disorder and Securocrats

While the state-owned press represented POSA as having enhanced the police's ability to deal with the scourge of electoral violence the privately-owned press denounced the law often describing it as draconian and "anti-democratic" as it was used to deny the opposition permission to hold rallies (*Daily News*, 22-02-02, p2). While the state-owned press celebrated the statements by the police that they would use fire arms to stamp out election violence the private press condemned such statements as grossly irresponsible.

In a commentary headlined "Public Order is not about shooting" *The Zimbabwe Independent* (29-02-08, p8) described Commissioner Chihuri's warning that the use of fire arms against perpetrators of election violence as "gratuitous threats" which were as bad as "the threats of street protests and violence by those who lose elections" The newspaper argued that by advocating shooting, Chihuri "extolling degrees in violence was as bad as glorifying the mayhem which followed the announcement of the Kenyan election results" a reference to Chamisa's utterances mentioned earlier. The newspaper argued that maintaining order did not have anything to do with shooting and implored the police to be impartial in the execution of their duties.

The paper stated that:

> The police can only hope to get as much public respect as it deserves in terms of how impartial it is seen to be in applying the law. Once the police are seen to partially enforce a law already discredited as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) they can only bring dishonour on themselves. It starts with the way the law is applied regarding public meetings, gatherings and rallies. All parties must be seen and feel that they are being treated equally. The conduct of the police must be beyond reproach, a tall order in such a charged atmosphere but one that must be executed with honour (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 29 February, 2008, p8).

In the context of political polarisation, the meaning of 'law and order' and the methodology of policing it were highly contested terms which meant different things to different people. While the state press viewed POSA as a panacea for maintaining law and order, the private press saw POSA particularly its "selective application" as an obstacle to the maintenance and restoration of order. The selective application of the law thus became a motif in the authority-order discourse. For instance *The Zimbabwe Independent* (08-02-02, p1) claimed that "illegal farm occupiers" had become a law unto themselves while *The Daily News*, (28-02-02, p6) reported that war veterans had "effectively" become "the law of the land and the de-facto rulers" adding that "the rule of law was set aside and has remained suspended right up to present- to be substituted by a government of Zanu (PF), for Zanu (PF) supporters by war veterans". This contradicted the narrative that the authorities were in full control of the situation. The private press constructed a counter-narrative of total breakdown of law and order whereby impunity was the order of the day (*Daily News*, 28-02-02, p6).

In order to bolster their view that there was a breakdown of law and order and the impartiality in its application the private press gave considerable attention to the alleged involvement of state security agencies primarily the police and the army in acts of election violence. Examples of such news headlines are: "Police storm MDC offices" (*Daily News*, 04-07-13, p1), "MDC implicate soldiers in terror" (*Daily News*, 19-02-02, p14), "Mugabe ropes in own troops" (*News Day*, 23-07-13, p1) and "Army boosts Mugabe campaign" (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 13-06-08). These headlines suggest breakdown of civilian authority and securitization of the state and a legal vacuum.

Perceptions that civilian authority has been deferred to the securocrats have been linked to the defence forces' declarations that they can only recognise leadership with liberation war credentials. For instance, on the eve of elections in 2002 the then Army Commander, General Vitalis Zvinavashe who was representing the heads of the Defence Forces issued a statement declaring that they would not recognise any leader without any liberation background[31]. Since the statement has been widely quoted as an example of total breakdown civilian authority it is worth quoting at length. Zvinavashe said:

> We wish to make it very clear for all Zimbabweans that the security organisations will only stand in support of those political leaders that will pursue Zimbabwean values, traditions and beliefs for which thousands of lives were lost, in pursuit of Zimbabwe's hard won independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national interests…To this end let it be known that the highest office in the land is a straightjacket whose occupant is expected to observe the objectives of the liberation struggle. We will therefore not accept, let alone support or salute anyone with a different agenda that threatens the very existence of our sovereignty, our country and our people (cited in Tendi, 2013, 830).

The above and similar statements by various heads of the security services sector have been a cause for consternation during elections and became the cause and hinge around which agitations for security sector reforms were mounted by the opposition parties during the Government of National Unity (GNU) between 2009 and 2014). Tendi (2013, 831) argues that Zvinavashe's statement has been selectively interpreted by some scholars.

[31] The statement was interpreted by most people as a veiled reference to the opposition MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai who does not have a liberation war background and has often lampooned in the state media that he ran away from the liberation war.

He accuses some scholars of neglecting the external factors that prompted the security agencies to intervene in the political affairs of the country. Tendi observes that the "perceived onslaught on Zimbabwe's sovereignty" through tendentious and partial media coverage, the imposition of sanctions by the United States of America and the unceremonious withdrawal of military assistance by Britain in 2001 precipitated the security agencies' statement (Tendi 2013, 831). Tendi rightly points out that the statement was a culmination of "a strong sense of siege" caused by malicious "international and local private media coverage about the military, a hostile western foreign policy towards Zimbabwe and "targeted sanctions".

This study, however, disputes with Tendi's characterisation of the economic embargo as being "targeted" and argues that the declared and undeclared sanctions coupled with the hostile foreign and local private media coverage and threats by the British to intervene militarily in Zimbabwe exacerbated Zanu (PF)'s siege mentality since the party regarded the economic embargo as a form of soft violence which induced disaffection against the ruling party and thereby generate votes for the opposition. The view that sanctions were a form of soft violence meant to "extort" votes from the sanctions battered electorate is echoed by Mpetiwa (2008) who alludes to the coercive effect of economic sanctions at the height of the economic melt-down after the first round of voting in 2008. Mpetiwa writes that:

> Now some people voted for him (Tsvangirai) not because they like or love him and his leadership, but simply because they are afraid of starving to death. If Tsvangirai really cared for the people, he would have long called for the removal of the illegal sanctions (Mpetiwa, 2008, p8).

In the specific context of Zimbabwean electoral contests election violence did not just mean physical violence but encompassed all other coercive measures such as soft violence (a recurrent theme in this researcher's conversations with citizens in Chapter Seven) and was meant to tilt the scale in favour of the other party. Zanu (PF) viewed sanctions as a measure to blackmail the populace so that they could vote for the opposition. The state security viewed their role as that of guarding against this blackmail.

The lessons learnt here are, firstly; that external interference in societies characterised by social and political cleavages does not always bring about the desired outcomes, if anything it may fuel suspicions and mistrust among belligerents since the outsider can be viewed as aiding the opposite side to gain power.

Secondly, the impartiality of national institutions (the media included) can nurture feelings of resentment among citizens and possibly sow seeds of retaliatory violence because impartiality creates a vacuum whereby people are tempted to take the law into their own hands. Nyamnjoh (2005) argues that unbalanced news is a violation of human rights and is, therefore, inimical to the accomplishment of the democratic project.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed discursive constructions of electoral violence by the state-owned and the privately-owned press in Zimbabwe during Presidential and Parliamentary elections held in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2013. It was apparent that the two press camps produced competing, if not antagonistic discourses in relation to the level of election violence, blameworthiness, and the conduciveness or lack of conduciveness thereof and the environment for a free and fair electoral contest.

As election violence became the singular determinant for a free and fair election the state-owned and the privately-owned press adopted divergent discursive strategies for defining and representing election violence. On the one hand an optimistic state-owned press doing its bidding for the government and ruling party blamed the opposition MDC for most of the election violence while it constructed election violence as decreasing and the state as in full control of the situation. On the other, a cynical privately-owned press blamed Zanu (PF) for the election violence, depicted violence as always escalating and the political environment as characterised by the breakdown of law and order. As election violence became a tool for either legitimating or de-legitimating political players the state-owned press used mystification, a moral equivalence frame, denialism, ex-nomination, ambiguous morality and anonymous sources to mask the ruling party's culpability for election violence. The private press on the other hand used nomination, demonization, humanistic rhetoric and hyperbole to construct the Zanu (PF) as the party responsible for election violence while portraying the MDC as the victims of election violence. However, both camps depended on institutional sources, with the state-owned press relying more on the police while the privately-owned press depended on Non-Governmental sources.

The private-press accentuated the liberal human rights framework supportive of intervention on humanitarian grounds while the state-owned press drew attention to the national interest and sovereignty of the state and its monopoly to restore law and order. As a consequence each side gave salience to some aspects of election violence which legitimised their view while suppressing those which de-legitimised it.

Thus the discursive construction of electoral violence by the privately-owned press and the state-owned press reflects the clash of ideological values, with the private press accentuating liberal democratic values epitomised by the sanctity of human rights, democracy and good governance, while on the other hand the state-owned press extolled the virtues of national interest and state sovereignty.

In the ensuing dialogue of the deaf the meaning of violence became elastic, depending as it was on who was the victim or perpetrator or who stood to benefit from it. It became clear that contrary to the view that simply media reflect on reality and that meanings are free-floating reality it is a socially constructed and deeply implicated in relations of power. This has wider implications for democracy.

CHAPTER SIX: MEMORIALISATION, CONDEMNATION AND PEACE ADVOCACY DISCOURSE

6.1 Introduction

> The media play two crucial roles with respect to election violence. First, they provide evidence- or at least the external implication - that an election is illegitimate or being contested domestically, regardless of the fairness of the election or its certification by independent election commissions and election monitoring organizations. Interpretive frames may imply that an election has not been "free and fair" and has been rigged through voter intimidation or vote-counting fraud (Meadow 2009, 237).

The above quotation alludes to the main focus of this chapter, which is an extension of the previous chapter. It examines additional themes emanating from the corpus of textual data from the press, and interviews with journalists and editors from the newspapers selected for this study. Three themes that relate to the way in which the press sought to either legitimise or de-legitimise elections through particular modes of representation of electoral violence are discussed in this chapter. These are memorialisation (the accentuation of residual electoral violence), condemnation, and peace advocacy discourses. The intention is to map out how election violence is constituted through these discursive constructions. Data from interviews with journalists and editors are used to the answer the WHY component of the research question so as to gain deeper insights on why different newspapers represented election violence in the way they did during elections held between 2000 and 2013.

Reflections are made on the implications for theory and democracy through an engagement with the literature reviewed. The chapter argues that the two press camps constructed competing versions of reality in relation to the three themes in order to either legitimise or de-legitimise the electoral process and the outcome, thus bringing to the fore the discretionary power of the press to shape public opinion and perceptions.

6.2 Memorialisation

Both the privately-owned and the state-owned press framed election violence in a wider context by invoking memories of election violence experienced in previous electoral contests[32]. As demonstrated below the intensity with which this was done tilted more in the direction of the privately-owned press than in the state-owned press. Largely, this entailed making reference, alluding to, or incorporating or activating past incidences of election violence and making them germane to an ongoing electoral context, akin to what Fairclough (cited in Fisker 2009, 36) calls inter-textuality or "the way in which specific texts draw on earlier meaning formations and how they mix different discourses" (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 139). Thus election violence discourse about for example, the 2013 elections recalls and articulates discourses about the violence in the 2008 presidential run-off or an earlier election. Fisker (2009,36) argues that the significance of analysing inter-textuality is that one will be able to understand what and why particular texts are included in a communication act and what texts are not included and why. Since the news-making process is premised on particular journalistic conventions, the selection of stories that invoke past memories of election violence (throw back) was a conscious editorial decision.

[32] For example, "Mugabe reneges on pledge to compensate Fifth Brigade victims" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 30-06-2000, p1-21), "Tsvangirai to compensate victims of violence" (The Financial Gazette, 07-03-02, p7), "Former dissidents part of youth training team" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 01-02-02, p12), "Investigate Mugabe for atrocities says foreign media" (Daily News, 06-03-02, p16), "MDC ledges to compensate victims of violence" (Daily News, 06-03-02, p16), "People's desire for change cannot be suppressed" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 01-03-02, p8). "Violence victims bank on new government" (Newsday, 15-07-13, p8), "Murambatsvina victims' decade of nightmare, desolation" (Newsday, 10-07-13, p7), "2008 poll nightmare still haunts rural areas" (Newsday, 10-07-13, p3), "Fear of violence linger on in Mash Central: PM" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 12-07-13, p4), "Jerera villagers fear repeat of murders if Zanu (PF) loses" "Daily News, 23-07-13, p7), "Gukurahundi sore point in Matabeleland- Dube" (The Zimbabwe Independent, 12-07-13, p5).

Given that news is generally defined as that which is new (Harcup and O'neill 2001, 261), the intertextualising of election violence as was particularly the case during the 2013 harmonised elections, was disrupted in traditional news values and there must be a rationale for that.

Unlike in previous electoral contexts, in 2013 the newspapers focused more on election violence from previous elections than on violence that was taking place at the time. For instance, the *Daily News* (23-07-13, p7) published a story headlined "Jerera villagers fear repeat of murders if Zanu (PF) loses" (**see Appendix 1.6**). The story dwelt on the experiences of villagers in Jerera, in the southern province of Masvingo, who reportedly feared voting in the 2013 harmonised elections because of their experiences of violence during the 2008 presidential run-off. The alleged victims of election violence were given a long leash to adumbrate their traumatic experiences in 2008. The alleged victims were able to construct riveting narratives that enable the reader to visualize their horrendous experiences. Thus, the alleged victims of election violence become active agents who are able to tell their own stories. The message is that in spite of perceptions of relative peace during the 2013 elections, any mention of elections triggers memories of what happened in 2008.

The perception that the experience of 2008 is "too difficult to rub off" is a motif in the narratives of the alleged victims of election violence. Thus, fear is constructed as residual, pervasive and adversely affecting electoral behaviour during 2013 elections. The alternating of the first and third person narrative style helps construct election violence as a permanent traumatic experience, thereby, enhancing the credibility of the victims' testimonies about violence. One of the alleged victims of the 2008 election violence is quoted saying:

> I still have strong memories of this day, June 3, 2003 when I woke up early in the morning from my village to Jerera Growth point to book a better place on the mealie-meal queue (*Daily News,* 23-07-13, p7).

The newspaper adds that:

> The memories of June, 3, 2008 are still fresh and linger in the brains and hearts of scores of Jerera villages. They fear the repeat of heinous political murders if Zanu (PF) is trounced again in the coming make or break general polls slated for July 31 (*Daily News*, 23-07-13, p7).

Words such as "memories", "brains", "hearts" "fresh", and "linger" connote enduring trauma, implying that election violence cannot be treated as a single episode, but has long-lasting effects on victims.

The reader is told in straight prose that despite the relative peace during the 2013 harmonised elections, people are still afraid to vote for their preferred candidates. Alleged survivors of the 2008 election violence are assembled to relive their "horrific" experiences using a testimonial narrative style. The following excerpts from the story are Illustrative:

> As a survivor who has a first-hand account of what happened on June 3, I don't think I will be able to go to the polling station…I am afraid that if I cast my vote for the political party I prefer, lots of people will lose their lives again (*Daily News*, 23-07-13, p7).

The Daily News's use of the first person narrative style enhances the newspaper's claim to a particular regime of truth by forcing readers into an "emotional solidarity" (Nyambi 2009, 5) with the victims of election violence. The testimonial accounts are poignantly undergirded by an evocative third person narrative which lucidly captures the traumatic experiences of the victims of violence. The excerpts below are instructive in this regard:

- Clemence Chikovo of Chandipwisa village in Ward 28 under chief Bota said fear is still gripping many villagers. He said MDC supporters were fearful of wearing party regalia given to them (*Daily News*, 23-07-13, p7)

- But for Mbuya Gweme, the memories of the 2008 have been too difficult to rub off and will affect how she votes on July 31 (*Daily News*, 23-07-13, p7)

- Memory Pedzerai is a survivor of June 3 arson attack, who was bundled into an unregistered Mitsubishi single cab truck (*Daily News*, 23-07-13, p7).

Words such as "fear", "fearful" "memories", and "survivor" signify that election violence is traumatic and can affect voting behaviour long after the violent event has passed. This is significant in so far as it opens up other ways of thinking about election violence and the role of the media in representing election violence, particularly in fragile societies with a long history of violence and social cleavages.

It is ironic that these victims of election violence were able to disclose their identities yet they claim that they were afraid to vote for their preferred candidates. This might be an indication that voters associate election violence more with electoral outcomes rather than processes. It might also suggest that residual violence lingers much longer in the minds of victims and can be equally effective in biasing the electoral outcomes, the same way as visible election violence.

Although this is a subject that warrants a separate investigation, it is clear that the impact of electoral violence on electoral outcomes is a complex issue. Further, it could be argued that the disclosure of the identity of the victims of election violence helped to humanize them thereby making the readers emphathise with them, something that cannot easily be done if they had been depersonalised.

Similarly, *Newsday* (15-07-13, p8) had a story with the headline "Violence victims bank on new government" whereby alleged victims of election violence were interviewed. Using a human interest narrative style of reporting, the alleged survivors of election violence, who are opposition party supporters were helped to memorize their heart-rending experiences of election violence in a cinematic way. They divulge that they are still living in fear in spite of the fact that five years had passed since their ordeal at the hands of Zanu (PF) supporters. One of the alleged victims of violence laments the fact that:

> Fear is still there sometimes because of what we went through. Some people died but we are lucky to be alive. It's unfair for politicians to be elected at our expense. I fought in this struggle and spent months with a baby in cells with no nappies or what and I hope they will recognise us (*Newsday*, 15-07-13, p8).

Further, the newspaper quoted an opposition member of parliament who suggested that the new government (presumably an MDC government) should reunite families of the victims so that they heal emotionally.

A spokesperson of the smaller faction of the MDC who was quoted by the newspaper underscores the subtle but profound effects of election violence commenting thus:

> Victims of political violence are many. The reality is that there are generations which are now indirect victims of the violence. The *Gukurahundi* atrocities were our highest level of black on black violence and the solution to the psychological and physical scars are very complex. The beginning of dealing with all this is seeking and telling the truth. When the truth is told people will be able to express what they desire. It is important to allow the victims to participate in finding solutions. A prescriptive approach cannot be adequate (*Newsday*, 15-07-13, p8).

The cyclical and residual nature of election violence, particularly in societies riddled with cleavages engender a culture of entitlement by the victims of election violence and might in turn trigger more violence if certain expectations are not met or if restorative and rehabilitative needs are not given to the victims so that they can be fully integrated into society. In this instance, the press becomes highly implicated in the sense that they are able to provide some interpretative frameworks that shape social reality.

Treating election violence as an inter-textual text enabled the privately-owned press to project the traumatic experiences of election violence and its residual effects on the citizens thereby constructing election violence as a seamless experience whose effects transcend a single electoral episode. Juxtaposing the 2008 to the 2013 election obliterates the context in which the 2008 and 2013 elections were held, thus rendering their time and space boundaries seamless.

The fact that readers are not told that the photographs of the alleged victims of election violence who are dressed in hospital garb are from the archives constitutes a conspiracy of silence. This shows how the privately-owned press sought to project the victims of election violence as "damaged survivors" (Henri and Grunebaum, n.d. 2) by venturing into the psychological realm of election violence. The irreparable damage of election violence has led some scholars to argue that Zanu (PF) benefited from a "harvest of fear" (Zamuchiya 2013) during the 2013 harmonised elections.

A significant percentage of Zimbabwean citizens refused to disclose their political affiliation in a survey on voting intentions because of fear of intimidation in what has been described as a "margin of terror" (Bratton and Masunungure 2012, 1).

This suggests that, as a discursive formation, electoral violence has the capacity to foster behaviour and meanings that undermine democratic values. Bekoe (2010, 3) supports this view when she says that:

> Violence can also undermine the election itself. With the presence or threat of violence, voters may opt not to register or decide to stay away from the polls, altogether, candidates may withdraw or politicians may use it as a reason to cancel or postpone the election.

It can be argued that through its excavation of past experiences of election violence text the *Daily News* implicitly sought to delegitimize the 2013 harmonised general elections.

The *Daily News* was not the only newspaper which deployed "memorialization"as a discursive strategy. *Newsday* and *The Zimbabwe Independent* also did that. For instance, *Newsday* (10-07-13, p3) had a story with the headline "2008 poll nightmare still haunts rural areas" **(see Appendix 1.7),** whereby MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai reportedly paid tribute to his party supporters in Mashonaland Central for their "resilience in the midst of adversity". Tsvangirai claimed that "the aura of fear pervaded the province, five years after the bloody 2008 presidential run-off election". He stated that:

> There is a strong element of fear among the people. My message is that fear has to be translated into hope of a new government and a new era. If you need hope, vote MDC so that we don't go back to the 2008 (*Newsday*, 10-07-13, p3).

The evocation of memories of past electoral violence went beyond the reflective function of the press in the sense that the act of remembering was followed by certain concrete actions by the victims of election violence. The spectre of 2008 was meant to galvanize the electorate to overwhelmingly vote out Zanu (PF) and vote the MDC into power instead so that 'lasting peace' would return to Zimbabwe.

In the context of the 2013 elections, the memorialisation of violence became some kind of a scarecrow similar to the wads of the Zimbabwean dollar notes[33] used by the opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai at rallies to remind the electorate about the economic meltdown of the previous decade. *The Zimbabwe Independent* (12-07-13, p4) (**see Appendix 1.8**) took up the same story and its headline was "Fear of violence lingers in Mash central: PM". The headline underscored the idea that residual fear was palpable. MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai reportedly lamented the fact that, although election violence had declined during the 2013 elections fear was still prevalent among the people. Tsvangirai claimed that his supporters were still being reminded of the "horrors of the 2008 disputed elections". He claimed that "Zanu (PF) was employing discreet methods of intimidating his supporters in the province in order to frustrate his supporters".

By voicing Tsvangirai this way, *The Zimbabwe Independent* discarded the view that election violence was a single episode. Hence the privately-owned press re-inscribed election violence as residual and durable rather than being an ephemeral and a transient event, thus undercutting the official narrative whereby the relative peacefulness of the 2013 elections was equated to free and fairness of the elections. This dovetails with the argument made in Chapter Two, that the media can define election violence narrowly or broadly depending on their agenda (Meadow 2009).

Meadow argues that through their interpretative frameworks the media can legitimise or de-legitimise elections by providing external evidence to that effect. By venturing into the psychic realm of electoral violence the privately-owned press undercut the official grand narrative that the absence of physical violence in 2013 was synonymous with peace. In the same vein, some critics argue that judging elections to be free and fair on the grounds of mere absence of physical violence is "too simplistic" (Ntuli 2013, 8).

[33] During the 2013 election campaigns the MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai carried bundles of the replaced national currency, the Zimbabwean dollar to remind voters that failure to vote the ruling party, Zanu (PF) out power would mean a return to the Zimbabwean dollar, hyperinflation and the disappearance of commodities from supermarket shelves as was the case in 2008.

But as Meadow asserts the media play different roles with respect to election violence.

> Firstly, they provide evidence or at least the external implication- that an election is illegitimate or being contested domestically regardless of the fairness of the election or its certification by the independent election commission and election monitoring organisations. Interpretive frames may imply that the election has not been "free and fair" and has been rigged through voter intimidation or vote counting fraud. Second, by showing compatriots being hurt or killed the media serve to inform the domestic audience of the risks and dangers of participating in or protecting the election while graphic images of violence may incite further protests, such protests more often dissipate in response to the risks, especially where the media also cover suppression of protests (like those in Tianaimen Square or more recently in Iran) and officials use the media to threaten violence against protesters (Meadow 2009, 237).

As a discursive strategy the memorialisation of election violence necessitated the deployment of an interpretative framework for de-legitimising elections by the private press. These interpretative frameworks recall the professional norms and functions of watchdog journalism (Eriksson and Ostman 2013, 306) whereby, the acts of scrutinising and exposing the hidden agendas of those in power are highly prized ideals of the press.

6.2.1 Raising the spectre of Gukurahundi and Operation Murambatsvina

The memorialisation of election violence did not just entail juxtaposing past election violence with the present, but also evoking other forms of violence outside electoral contexts. An example is the evocation of Operation Murambatsvina, a violent urban clean-up operation carried out by the government after the 2005 general elections (Mlambo 2008) and reference to Gukurahundi, the killing of over 20 000 civilians by the security forces in the Ndebele speaking Matabeleland and Midlands provinces in the early 1980s. Although these events happened many years back the privately-owned press made reference to them, within the framework of elections, particularly the 2013 harmonised elections. For instance, *Newsday* (10-07-13, p7) (**see Appendix 1.9)** published a story with the headline "Murambatsvina victims' decade of nightmare, desolation" where it was reported that families displaced during Operation Murambatsvina/Operation Restore Order in 2005 were "still wallowing in poverty, without decent shelter eight years after government destroyed their homes".

The story extensively focuses on the deplorable human conditions of the victims of Operation Murambatsvina, what can be referred to as "the commodification of suffering", whereby the plight of the poor is exploited for political profit through excessive imagery of their appalling living conditions.

The place in which the victims of Murambatsvina live is described as a "squatter camp" and their houses are "makeshift" and the resettlement in which they live is described as "desolate" symbolising alienation, neglect and lack of care. The reader is overwhelmed by the ubiquitous images of despair in the story. Thus, the residents of the settlement are described as "jobless" and without any source of income, hence most of them cannot send their children to school while their "appeals to government for help", are said to have "fallen on deaf ears". Many of them "have lost hope of getting any help from anywhere". Although the story foregrounds Operation Murambatsvina as the source of their victimhood, upon further inspection one realises that some of the residents at the settlement predate the clean-up operation. For instance, Zimba who is extensively quoted expressing his victimhood has been at the informal settlement since 1993, twelve years before the clean-up operation was implemented.

By suppressing facts about the history and actual circumstances of the informal settlement while attributing the suffering of the residents to negligence by the government *Newsday* constructs the Zanu (PF) as a party that is insensitive to the plight of the poor. The notion that the government is heartless and ruthless saturates the story and is signified by the following statements: "The government is not sensitive to the plight of the people. Their interests are self-enrichment".

- "Residents of this squatter camp have also been subjected to political violence because they are perceived to be MDC-T".
- "If you ask anyone here you will be told that this government cannot help".
- "People are just numbers. We are not treated as human beings".
- "…our efforts have fallen on deaf ears".

The residents of this squatter camp are portrayed as victims of double tragedy in the sense that they are subjected to political persecution (because they are perceived to be supporters of the MDC-T) and they also suffer from neglect by an "uncaring" government. However, all hope is not lost because they are now banking on the July 31 (2013) election to transform their despair into hope through the vote. Thus, *Newsday* employed an interpretive framework loaded with evaluative and explanatory quotations from the news sources. Benson and Hallin contend that interpretive journalism positions journalists to shape and control the news (cited in Salgado and Stromback 2011, 15). In this instance, the interpretative journalistic framework enabled *Newsday* to accentuate the perception that Zanu (PF) was not electable because it was insensitive to the plight of the poor. This view corroborates Meadow's (2007) observation that political violence can be instrumentalised for gaining or retaining power.

Apart from Operation Murambatsvina, the private press also evoked the spectre of the civil war in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces in the 1980s, known as Gukurahundi. It must be pointed however, that although *Gukurahundi* has been a recurring issue in the news media during election time it was more visible during the 2013 election.

The Zimbabwe Independent (12-07-13, p5) had a story with the headline "*Gukurahundi* sore point in Matabeleland-Dube", (**see Appendix 1.10**) in which Zanu (PF) central committee member and parliamentary candidate for Bulawayo-Makokoba constituency, retired Colonel Tshinga Dube reportedly lamented his party's failure to "effectively resolve long-standing concerns in Matabeleland, including the 1980s Gukurahundi massacres", which he described as a "sore point for people in the region".

Dube reportedly mourned the failure by his party to address the Gukurahundi and complaints about the marginalisation of the region, adding that this could cost the party votes in the 2013 elections. He reportedly said that:

> I have said it over and over again that we have failed to address these issues (Gukurahundi and marginalisation). A lot of unpleasant things happened here. Somebody who was not affected might just say it was war while those who were affected will call it by a different name (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 12-07-13, p5).

Dube's sentiments testify that violence and memory are inextricably intertwined and the attempts by the state to embargo the memory on Gukurahundi brings to the fore the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dimensions of election violence. For instance, there are phrases in the *Zimbabwean Independent* story referred above which suggest that Gukurahundi is a taboo subject. Examples include: "A lot of unpleasant things happened here", "We are not even touching the nerve centre of the problems", "People may smile at you, but deep down they still retain a lot of hatred" and "Somebody who was not affected might just say it was war while those who were affected will call it by a different name".

These phrases suggest that *Gukurahundi* cannot be spoken about openly. Hence, resuscitating the memories of *Gukurahundi* during election time became a discursive strategy to "break the silence" and remind the electorate, particularly in the Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces not to forget about the "state sponsored violence" visited upon them by the Zanu (PF) government.

Zanu (PF) is projected as a violent, cruel, undemocratic and unrepentant party implying that it does not deserve the electorate's vote. Significantly, some private-press journalists do not agree with the idea of truncating violent episodes such as *Gukurahundi* from the electoral context.

Dumisani Muleya, the editor of *The Zimbabwe Independent* argues that *Gukurahundi* was very much linked to electoral politics, particularly Zanu (PF)'s desire to impose a one-party state. He argues that:

> *… we later saw, I mean eh, eh, Mugabe going all out to crush his political opponent, Joshua Nkomo and Zapu and of-course he deployed the army, the military, the 5th Brigade thing and then we had things like the Gukurahundi issue, which most of the time people are, remove it from the political and electoral context. That was an outcome of an election that was violent and a rivalry that has not, eh, that had not been put to a stop. So in order to gain eh, political advantage Mugabe had to unleash that. And remember also the context of the election was that Zanu was campaigning; in its manifesto in 1980 it had one party state as one of the key principles of that manifesto* (Interview with Dumisani Muleya, 11 May 2015, Harare).

Muleya justifies the inclusion of on *Gukurahundi* in the context of 2013 elections on the grounds of providing a context and background. He reasons that:

> …you cannot just report incidence of violence in isolation they have to be connected to the past, they need context, and they need background. We need to remind people, it's for context, background and, and, and, and, eh, eh, historical records… what I am trying, trying to paint, a picture that there is a historical context that the use of political and electoral violence by political parties, in this case Zanu (PF) has been systematic. That's the approach, it's not isolated, it's systematic. Eh, it's like it continuously happens, eh, eh, situation of incidents of violence which are not connected. So these are not incidents which are not connected. These are eh, events that are defined by violence (Interview with Dumisani Muleya, 11 May 2015, Harare). This suggests that election violence is viewed as seamless and continuous rather than episodic. This also implies that electoral contests are viewed as interrelated rather than disconnected, hence the need for back-grounding. Geoff Nyarota concurs with the necessity of back-grounding and providing a context when reporting on election violence. His explanation was that:

…events are placed by the media in their proper context (clearing his throat) and context in some cases emanates from the previous occurrences, ah, ah, if in 2002 there was violence, ah and in the previous election in 2000, 2002 was the presidential, wasn't it?... 2000 was the parliamentary. A reporter in covering an incident of violence in say Marambapfungwa (sic), if the reporter went to the National Archives or went online and discovered that in the same constituency there has been a lot of violence in the previous election, surely he would be within his rights to inform his readership of that. A-a, what I tend to disagree with myself is predict…I have been fond of criticising journalists, especially foreign journalists who say, ah, there is no violence in Makoni District this time and makes a news item of a non-event, that nothing has happened. They could justify that by saying, yaah, we see nothing has happened. There has always been violence. People have been murdered, but this time surprisingly there is no, there is no violence of that nature. And to them it is worthy of recording and maybe in a certain perspective it may be worthy of recording that there is an improvement in the political maturity of the people resident in the constituencies in question. But then it may be discovered that there is no rival candidate in that election (laughs) so there is no reason for violence. But the point I am making is a-a, your coverage, journalists, foreign correspondents will record in this first or second paragraph that there was no violence. This is totally different. I personally, as a reporter, am, ah, somewhat opposed to that, highlighting that which has not happened, and, but newspapers are published for different readerships (Interview with Geoff Nyarota, 11 May 2015, Harare).

Recalling past violence goes beyond the back-grounding function in the sense that it enhances watchdog journalism espoused by the privately-owned press in Zimbabwe. Wisdom Mudzungairi, the acting editor of Newsday, the daily newspaper under the Alpha Media illustrates watchdog notion of journalism thus:

> *It's very important, you know, in order for you to correct the present. If you have a challenge, you must look back. How did it happen? How was it sorted out and how should we deal with this current problem? 2008, it's not easy to forget that because it was bloody, some say 200 people died, some say 300 people died. But all these people, these are numbers of people who died but what is sad is that the way these people died, the way how they were killed is what is very crucial, right? Some were even burnt, so many other heinous acts also happened. Many people were also maimed. So each time there is an election and people go out to vote you will realise that even today when you go out to the rural areas and you are campaigning you will realise that, ah, people will still come, right? They won't say anything. They will be coming. Zanu (PF) comes they will be (makes sound and gesture of a stampede); they will go there in large numbers, not because they support Zanu (PF) sometimes, but because they fear what happened. Remember Zanu (PF) has also used that. Remember these people died in the run-up to the, to the ahmm, eh, presidential run-off, June 27, right? Was it June 27 or June 28? Right? And you know what then happened? The next elections Zanu (PF) had to make sure the same elections were held in June again, June again, June 27, why? It's psychological. So that people can remember 2008. This is the point (laughs). So it is important for us to refer people to that and say, you know what, when an election comes, remember that. Do you need this monster? That's one. And secondly, you go there to an election, you must go to an election, when they call you to a rally go there, don't remain at home, you will be killed, go to the rally, but you know what, because if you read the same story, we, I think we even stated that you, No, No, it's not possible for somebody to use binoculars and see who you vote for. It's not possible. So remember that it's not possible. This is simply propaganda* (Interview with Wisdom Mudzungairi, 15 May 2015, Harare).

It is instructive to note that the privately-owned press used the memory of election violence to remind them of their obligations as citizens and to educate them on how to survive a violent electoral environment as well as to ensure that they make the 'right electoral' choices. Hence the privately-owned press adopted an activist journalistic model whereby they discarded any pretense of non-partisanship.

Although the dominant view among privately-owned journalists locates memorialisation of election violence within a journalistic logic of back-grounding some critics attribute this to the desire by the privately-owned press to de-legitimise elections. Some critics argue that dwelling on past incidents of violence is part of a private press strategy to discredit the elections on behalf of the opposition. Editor of *The Herald* Ceasar Zvayi argues that:

> So they (the private press) want to portray Zimbabwe as a country at war requiring external ah, ah, salvation, external intervention. So, you would find the MDCs would be crying Wolf every time, "People are being beaten, government is sending the army and the police on innocent citizens and they will try to put to and raise the spectre of Gukurahundi, you know the clashes between the Shonas and the Ndebeles, in the, soon after independence. So they always try to raise the tribal card and try to create a siege mentality. So we face that situation where, whenever, the MDCs cry Wolf we try as much as possible to find out if really they would have seen a wolf and most of the time we find out that they grandstand for the external gallery so that they justify their, because they receive a lot of funding over the years to depose Zanu (PF). They would want to justify the electoral outcome saying that Zanu (PF) has closed democratic space, there is no way we can win a free and fair election. So they always try to cry wolf, always try to, to them they don't care how they come to power, whether through illegal regime change or legal regime change, whether military intervention by Westerners to overthrow the government like what happened in Libya, they don't care. What they want is to come to power so that they justify the millions of dollars that they have received over the years (Interview with Ceasar Zvayi, 7 May 2015, Harare).

This suggests evoking past memories of violence is viewed by the state-owned press as motivated by a divisive political agenda to open up old wounds in an already divided society. However, for the private-press the justification for evoking memories of previous electoral violence firmly rests on their conviction that the effects of electoral violence are hardly confined to a single electoral episode as every election is bound to trigger fresh memories of the bad experiences.

This view is boldly captured in a commentary published in *The Financial Gazette* two weeks before the 2005 general elections thus:

> It is an understatement of significant proportions to say that the insanity of the past five years has left permanent emotional scars among disenfranchised whole families, orphaned children and wrought division, frustration, anger and hatred among the country's citizenry. Indeed there are no big enough words to describe the sad story. It is like saying the sea is wet. Suffice to say that the trauma spawned by this violence will haunt the nation for years to come when political skeletons from times past inevitably come tumbling out of the closet (*The Financial Gazette*, 2005).

The implications of the above extract are that the extent and impact of election violence cannot be determined by the physical human destruction in a single electoral episode, but should be looked at in a holistic and contextual circumstances and the role of the media in this instance becomes that of unearthing the historical dimensions of election violence. This shows that electoral violence is a terrain for serious contestation and the press is deeply implicated in this contestation in the in the sense that through their discursive choices they can either ignore or give salience to the subliminal effects of election violence.

6.2.2 Memorialisation of Violence in the State Press

To a lesser degree, the state-owned press also evoked memories of past violence in an indirect way compared to the privately-owned press in that its focus was on colonial violence and atrocities rather than election violence *per se*. For instance, *The Herald* (18-04-08, p1) carried a story with the headline "Chimoio victims remembered" whereby it reported on a delegation of Zimbabweans that were touring former liberation war camps and shrines in Chimoio, Mozambique, where some of the country's liberation war heroes killed by the Rhodesian forces during the liberation war of the 1970s were buried. On the face of it this story appears innocent and unrelated to elections. In any case such events were an annual event (remembering war heroes in Mozambique). But when one takes into account that this was in the run-up to the 29 March 2008 harmonised elections a picture begins to emerge.

For instance, the leader of the delegation, the then deputy minister of Youth Development and Employment Creation, Saviour Kasukuwere reportedly urged the youth "to be politically conscious especially in these trying times" and "to emulate and appreciate as well as jealously safeguard what their sisters and brothers died for" (*The Herald*, 18-04-08, p1). It is incontrovertible that memory and violence were used as a discursive strategy to affirm the ruling party as the authentic patriotic party because of its liberation struggle credentials. Not that this was the first time Zanu (PF) officials were doing this, but the fact that the party had suffered a major reversal in its hegemony was poignant. Even before the harmonised elections of 29 March 2008 there had been exhumations of war time mass graves in Mount Darwin, in the north-eastern part of the country.

The Sunday Mail (13-01-13, p7) extensively reported on the exhumations in which colonial violence was came into the spotlight. The story in question had a headline "Mt Darwin's killing fields: Rhodesia's wartime graves exposed".

It was emphasized that the "scars", "wounds", "skeletons", and "mass graves believed to be holding bodies of more than 1000 combatants and villagers" are emblematic of this residual colonial violence which was still "bare for everyone to see". One of the officials involved in the reburial of people found in mass graves reportedly said:

> Most of the atrocities committed by Rhodesian forces have been well documented and several fierce battles that occurred in Mt Darwin have been written about. However, the discovery of the skeletons has brought to the fore what we previously did not know about the brutal war (*The Sunday Mail*, 13-01-08, p7).

Chilling details of the Rhodesian atrocities are cinematically piled up one after the other thus: "Rhodesians dumped 280 bodies in a grave they dug at Mt Fura"…"at least 700 bodies were thought to be lying in graves scattered in the vicinity of the airstrip", "A further 750 bodies are believed to have been dumped in a disused shaft at Chibondo gold mine" and "More bodies continue to emerge in the district (*The Sunday Mail*, 13-01-08, p7).

The chilling details of colonial mass murder supply a cognitive frame for linking the colonial violence and the temporary reversal of the liberation project.

One editor from state-owned Zimpapers, however, refuted the view that stories like these were meant to influence people's electoral choices in the run-up to the make-or break presidential run-off, arguing instead, that these were published in the national interest. He argued that:

> I think those reports are really in my view, are not related to election violence but they are more about reminding people where they came from. Again, coming from that, eh, background where as you know we are aligned to the liberation ethos, that's what we believe in. So when it comes to elections, Zimpapers, if you study all our newspapers, we take a stand for and against. So when we bring up those articles they are meant to say people should take a stand, they should vote this particular way to say the liberation was about this and this is the price that was paid. That struggle, and we bring your Chimoio articles and things like that. So as I said before, elections in Zimbabwe from 2000 to date it's like a real war because there is this element of saying regime change. It's like you want to reverse the gains of independence, you want to reverse land reform and that kind of thing. So when we bring those stories from the past our justification for that is that we believe we are acting in the national interest and we also believe that our sense of national interest is informed by our history. So when we are taking a position to say vote this particular way, do this, that is informed by our history and that is the history of the liberation struggle so we don't equivocate on that. We come out clear and say, I think this is the reason we bring up those stories and in some instances when then there is condemnation of incidences of violence here and there is that attempt to then portray the government that this is the worst violence that has ever happened. Yeah, at times then we say, but look at our history, this is what has happened but that is not to justify violence (Interview with William Chikoto, 12 May 2015, Harare).

It is instructive to note that memory of the liberation struggle is mentioned in the same breath as the need to safeguard the "gains of independence" and there is no better way of doing that than urging the electorate to vote in a particular way. Highlighting the violence of the colonial regime's injustices provided an interpretative framework to the electorate to make electoral choices that guaranteed the preservation of the history of the struggle.

This is demonstrated in a *Herald* (11-05-00, p10) story with a headline "MDC seeking to create another Zimbabwe-Rhodesia" (*The Herald*, 11-05-00, p10) in which the newspaper accuses the MDC of seeking to "create another Zimbabwe-Rhodesia".[34] The paper wrote:

> The MDC alliance revives nightmares of Zimbabwe- Rhodesia, the failed attempt to legitimise Rhodesia through the façade of a black government. The people saw through it and the liberation movement swept it aside. MDC is the Trojan horse for Rhodesia and foreign interests…The war veterans and many Zimbabweans who had suffered under Rhodesia and who fought and destroyed Rhodesia and its half-sister, Zimbabwe Rhodesia, were alarmed. The Rhodesian enemy had defeated and forgiven, in alliance with Mr Tsvangirai, who had fled the liberation struggle back to rejoin Rhodesia, was declaring war anew and threatening to reverse the gains of the liberation struggle. Worse still, the MDC even threatened to put on trial the comrades for crimes supposedly committed after independence. Had the alliance suddenly turned into democrats and human rights activists? No, not at all. What about the crimes committed by the Rhodesian and other colonial regimes? And the massacres committed by Ian n Smith, his Selous Scouts, the Grey Scouts, the Rhodesian African Rifles, Muzorewa's *madzakutsaku* (sell-outs) and the Rhodesian air force? (*The Herald*, 11-05-00, p10).

The reference to "suffering under Rhodesia", "crimes committed after independence", "crimes committed by the Rhodesian and other colonial regimes" and "massacres committed by Ian Smith" might have fostered revulsion towards anyone or anything associated with Rhodesia, particularly for people who lived under the colonial system in Zimbabwe. It could be argued that, accentuating colonial violence while being silent on current election violence may suggest a way of rationalizing election violence.

Although both the privately-owned and the state-owned focused on residual violence their selections and motives were different. The privately-owned press sought to show the historical antecedence of election violence thereby de-legitimising the electoral outcome while the state-owned press sought to rationalise the current electoral violence by excavating past memories of colonial violence.

[34] Reference to the brief Government of National Unity formed after a compromise agreement between whites and some African leaders under the banner of internal settlement. The deal was shunned by the main liberation political parties Zanu (PF) and ZAPU and the war intensified resulting in the death of thousands of civilians.

From the foregoing discussion it becomes clear that as a discursive strategy memorialisation makes the meaning of election violence more elastic and complex particularly in contexts where violence is embedded in the historical circumstances of the state. As pointed out by De Los Ros (2009, 30) (Chapter Two) election violence "is a continuum influenced by different factors".

Apart from colonial violence, another way in which memorialisation manifested itself was the allusion to the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya which resulted in the death of about 1500 people (BBC cited in Onyebadi and Oyedeji, 216).

In a commentary titled "Zim must not fall into the same trap as Kenya", *The Sunday Mail,* (06-01-08. P9) opined that Britain and the United States of America's reaction to the Kenyan violence demonstrated the application of double standards by opting to use diplomatic means to resolve the conflict in Kenya while preferring confrontation and sanctions in Zimbabwe. The paper rhetorically asked:

> Let's just imagine what has happened in Kenya, where hundreds of people were slaughtered following the disputed results, had been in Zimbabwe, what would have been the reaction of Britain and America. We know what we see on the faces of these imperialists are crocodile tears. Their interests are superior to the lives of Kenyan blacks. One word which would definitely not be flying around is "diplomacy". If a handful of Zimbabweans were to die during post-election violence words and phrases like "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing would be the order of the day. To Britain it would not matter who was responsible for the violence. Even if it were opposition instigated all the blame would be laid at the feet of Zanu (PF) (*The Sunday Mail*, 06-01-08, p9).

By foregrounding the "double standards" of the powerful western countries *The Sunday Mail* constructed election violence as an instrument for regime change rather than a travesty of democracy, thus insinuating the existence of a dubious link between democracy and electoral violence. The newspaper's view that "Democracy as defined by the West is very different from our concept of the same ideology" clearly underscores the clash of political values between Zimbabwe and the West and by extension the press sympathetic to it (Chingono 2010).

In the ensuing contest of ideas it becomes evident that there is no consensus on the meaning of election violence. While the privately-owned press views election violence as a human rights issue the state-owned sees election violence as an instrument of imperialists.

Two contending discourses about election violence emerged in the press; the human rights discourse dominant discourses about election violence emerge, namely, the privately-owned press's "human rights" discourse and the state-owned press's "national interest discourse".

6.2.3 Condemnation

Both the privately-owned and the state-owned press published a number of stories condemning election violence. However, there were significant differences in the manner in which these condemnations were represented in the news. While the privately-owned press incorporated institutional voices in the condemnation of the violence, the state-owned press voiced ruling party officials.

During the 2002 presidential campaign for example, the *Daily News* published several stories condemning election violence. In those stories church leaders, civil society groups and election observer groups were quoted condemning election violence. Examples of such news headlines in the *Daily News* include: "Commonwealth ministers call for immediate end to violence and intimidation" (01-02-02, p20), "Church calls on regional leaders to urge Mugabe to end violence" (04-02-02, p24), "Churches deplore coercion of rural voters in no-go areas" (06-03-02, p3), "CZI deplores violence" (02-02-02, p25), "Australia warns of violence" (11-03-02, p3), "Bishops condemn political violence" (13-02-02, p20), "Anglican Church condemns violence, urges free campaign" (29-01-02, p2) and "Cosatu urges Zanu (PF) to disband youth brigade" (06-03-02, p3).

The newspaper also enlisted the voices of prominent personalities in society in its condemnation of election violence. Such examples include "Judge denounces political violence" (27-02-02, p16) and "Judge calls for Zimbabweans to refrain from violence ahead of poll" (06-02-02, p16).

However, the newspaper hardly voiced the political leadership of the main political parties, i.e. Zanu (PF) and MDC or any other political party for that matter, denouncing violence.[35]

Other privately-owned newspapers equally had a similar thrust, with *The Financial Gazette* (13-03-08, p1-31) declaring "Churches break silence on violence, results delay" and *The Zimbabwe Independent* (08-03-02, p2) had "Church calls for peace". The general tone of these stories was an appeal by church authorities for an end election violence, an appeal for tolerance among political players, general lamentation of political intolerance, pointing out the "destructive consequences" of (*Daily News*, 13-02-02, p20) election violence on human life and dignity, and a call to prosecute perpetrators of election violence "without fear or favour" (*Daily News*, 29-02-02).

In many instances such appeals were preceded by a chronicle of incidences of violence in which the perpetrator would be the ruling party. In *The Zimbabwe Independent* story (08-02-02, p20) the chairman of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Committee of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe, George Wauchope reportedly have lamented the lack of openness regarding the injustices of "the colonial past, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), the Matabeleland Gukurahundi as well as the atrocities since the 2000 parliamentary election", suggesting that there was a connection between the election violence which was taking place in Zimbabwe and past cases of violence. The incorporation of institutional voices in the condemnation of election violence was both for practical and strategic reasons. Practical in the sense that it institutions are easy to hold to account and their voices are considered to be representative of the broader society.

[35] A notable exception is a June 2000 story headlined "Top Zanu (PF) leaders call for end to violence" (Daily News 08-06-00, p1-2).

Veteran journalist, Geoff Nyarota sheds light thus:

A-a, violence is sometimes, is an event, which many ordinary citizens in a country such as Zimbabwe tend to oppose or tend to dislike. Aa, a news reporter could walk down First Street asking people what they think of violence. I want to believe that the response would be uniform, in that people would say violence is not good, especially during election time but the prospects of a reporter interviewing, a-a, that many respondents or sources is reduced if the reporter goes to institutions, institutional, the church, what does the church say about political violence? The church is representative. A-a, the political parties themselves become institutions in so far as they would condemn violence and they would speak on behalf of their thousands of supporters. So they, they become institutional commentators on the issue of violence (Interview with Geoff Nyarota, 11 May 2015, Harare).

The Editor of *The Zimbabwe Independent*, Dumisani Muleya concurs:

Well, one of the reasons is that institutional voices, they are easy to hold to account for what they say. They are easy to access their credibility, eh; they are also easy to go back, to hold, to account, if they give you wrong information. Eh, the other one is they carry weight because basically they are institutional. They are organised. They are an organised voice. Eh, the other is that institutional voices, they have capacity to verify things, to go and check if something happens, whereas individuals have difficulties to have that capacity to do so (Interview with Dumisani Muleya, 11 May, 2015, Harare).

Upon closer inspection of the above news headlines one realises that incorporation of institutional voices such as the church in the condemnation of election violence goes beyond simple professional considerations of 'easy access' and 'accountability' in the sense that it is a discursive strategy for rendering weight and authority to such messages.

Nyarota acknowledges this when he says that:

> *A-a, the church speaks for many. It is the voice of its followers. In normal circumstances, any political organisation would respect the word of the church. Although I want to believe that, the, the voice of the church is now being watered down by the multiplicity of church organisations (smiles). But In the traditional sense, and we are speaking of the traditional sense here because at that particular time, at the material time the church was still, ah, very representative of the original churches, Catholics, Anglicans, and the Catholics spoke on an issue with authority, say in condemnation of violence the politicians would listen. If the church had evidence that Zanu (PF) was involved in violence, for instance and they condemned violence, naturally I would expect one of ah, their leaders, President Robert Mugabe as a catholic himself to take heed. So indeed the church has authority. It has moral authority and in an area where there is violence you find that people are fleeing from violence in some cases, they flee in the direction of the church because they believe the church will offer them protection. So the church has that authority. And going back to time immemorial, in the case of Zimbabwe, before independence the church was expected to speak against violence. Talking about the war of liberation the church was divided, but the catholic church was for instance, took up a posi…took a position, ah, and condemned in many instances the RF (Rhodesian Front) government of Mr Ian Smith, and this is what the church followers expected of their churches. So the church has that moral authority, moral responsibility to speak on behalf of the people* (Interview with Geoff Nyarota, 11 May 2015, Harare).

By conscripting the voice of the church the privately-owned press sought to act as the moral conscience of society, a role which is consistent with the watchdog role espoused by the privately-owned press. The voice of the church as a moral institution lends moral authority to the version of reality constructed about election violence so much so that that constructed reality becomes uncontested, thereby, foreclosing other possible interpretations of reality. Said (cited in Hergaden 2013, 19) emphasizes the importance of authority in discourse when she argues that "truth" owes its status from who is saying what and how they say it. In their study of newspaper coverage of post-election violence in Kenya, Onyebadi and Oyedeji (2011, 227) note how some sections of the press in Kenya acted as moral witnesses by advocating for peace during a period of crisis.

The practices of the privately-owned press examined in this thesis do not necessarily fit into Onyebadi and Oyedeji's framework, but their moral agency argument somewhat echoes the watchdog role of the press observed in this thesis. However, their tendency to leverage a narrow selection of sources in condemning acts of election violence seems to be motivated by an agenda to de-legitimise the electoral process rather than to promote accountability.

Condemnation of election violence was characterised by insinuations and extrapolations meant to strangulate the supposed perpetrators of election violence rather than advocating for a return to peace and denunciation of election violence was followed by appeals not to endorse the electoral outcome on the grounds that there was violence. For instance, it was hinted that action would be taken against the political authorities in Harare if the issue of election violence was not addressed. Such a sentiment was contained in a story headlined "UN warns Mugabe on abuses" (*The Financial Gazette*, 22-06-02, p1) which quoted Mary Robinson, the then United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights who reportedly warned Mugabe to "stop violations of human rights and the intimidation of opponents by his supporters which she says threatened the credibility" of the impending elections. Robinson is reported to have written to Mugabe expressing her concerns about "reports of wide-spread human rights violations occurring in Zimbabwe" and how those abuses "threatened to undermine the validity of the upcoming parliamentary elections".

This shows that condemnation discourse on election violence in the private press was tied to the invalidation of the electoral verdict and possible prosecution of the instigators of the violence. Any endorsements of the electoral outcome were scoffed at as disingenuous by the privately-owned press. For instance, in a story with the headline "Wutawunashe endorses Mugabe's re-election" the *Daily News* (19-03-02, p3) reported that Andrew Wutawunashe "the chairman of Faith for the Nation, a group of churches" had endorsed "the re-election of President Mugabe in what has been a roundly condemned process".

It is worth noting that unlike those churches that condemned election violence which were addressed collectively as "the church" the protagonist in this particular case was disaggregated from the church as an institution hence his opinion was 'individualised' thereby, portraying him as a lone voice in the lunatic fringe. Further, the subjection of the protagonist's statement of endorsement of Mugabe's electoral mandate to interpretative evaluations, for example, that he did not mention that Mugabe's victory had been rejected by other election observation groups appears to scandalise him. In the specific context of the 2002 presidential election, which was closely contested, it is a fact that not all election observers endorsed the electoral outcome. Neither did all the election observers condemn it. Thus the *Daily News* accentuated the discourse of condemnation, while it suppressed voices that endorsed the election. Predictably, the newspaper castigated head of the Commonwealth observer mission to Zimbabwe, for the 2002 presidential election, former Nigerian head of state, General Abdulsalami Abubakar for having suggested that some sections of the media in Zimbabwe "were deliberately exaggerating the level of violence" in the run-up to the 2002 presidential elections (*Daily News*, 04-04-02, p6).

In a commentary titled "Abubakar has become accomplice in violence" (**see Appendix 1.11**) the newspaper described Abubakar's statements as "an insult to the memory of those who have died or have been injured in pre-election violence", a "blight on the reputation of the Commonwealth" and a betrayal of the trust "that the ordinary people of the world have in the outside world and international organisations coming to their rescue". The paper opined:

> Is the Commonwealth, as it stands today of any real value to the ordinary people if it so readily accommodates such excesses of human rights abuses by those in power? By showing their willingness to condone these abuses they have become accomplices in the oppression of the ordinary people- the real victims of terror being unleashed by the rulers (*Daily News* 04-03-02, p6).

In the rest of the commentary, Abubakar is conflated with the Commonwealth Observer Group and both are scandalised for failing to 'condemn' election violence.

It is argued that Abubakar's failure to condemn election violence demonstrates that Africans place "little value on human life" and that African leaders are keen to protect "their peers at the expense of their citizens", while "ignoring the tragic events unfolding right under their noses" *Daily News*, 04-03-02, p6). In this legitimisation of the electoral process entailed voicing negative sentiments while suppressing positive ones. This affirms the stance taken in this thesis that news neither reflects nor distort reality but construct reality discursively. The constructionist approach is process-oriented in the sense that it focuses on how certain discourses "are able to achieve hegemony in the news" (Lau 2012, 893) by deploying particular news making practices that make those particular discourses appear commonsensical or uncontestable. Just like the privately-owned press, the state-owned press also published a considerable number of stories condemning election violence. However, unlike the privately-owned press which conscripted institutional voices to condemn election violence, the state-owned press used institutional voices to for endorsements of the elections rather than for the condemnation of election violence. The state-owned press focused on statements by Zanu (PF) leaders, particularly President Robert Mugabe (and the police) denouncing election violence, (and in very few instances the voices of institutional bodies, notably in the 2000 parliamentary election)[36] violence but hardly voiced opposition leaders in this regard.

Examples of such news headlines are: "President slams violence" (*The Herald*, 30-05-08, p1), "President warns MDC-T" (*The Herald*, 17-06-08, p1), "Police warns MDC against violence" (*The Herald*, 9 July 2013, p1) (**see Appendix 1.12**) "Don't make reckless political statements, Madzore warned" (*The Herald*, 10-07-13, p4) and "Chamisa's threats alarming: Minister" (*The Herald*, 29-02-13, p2) and "Madzore must remember he is on bail" (*The Herald*, 12 July 2013, p7) (**see Appendix 1.13**). The latter two headlines deserve a more detailed analysis and shall be revisited later in this section.

[36] See for example, "Group deplores political violence" (The Herald, 17-06-00, p3), "Perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice: EU team" (The Herald, 30-06-00, p4). "Abubakar calls for cessation of inter-party hostilities" (The Herald, 20-06-00, p1)

In the state-owned press, the condemnation of election violence mainly focused on President Mugabe's speeches and sometimes the police.[37] For instance, a month before the 27 June Presidential run-off *The Herald (*30-05-08, p1) published a story with a headline "President slams violence" and a cliff hanger which read "MDC-T must stop these barbaric attacks forthwith". The newspaper reported that President Mugabe and his wife Grace Mugabe had visited victims of the opposition party's violence in Shamva. He reportedly said:

> We have seen the violent activities of the MDC-T in Shamva and other areas across the country. *Tasuruvara nezvataona*. (We have been saddened by what we saw). *Hatisi mhuka dzinopisirana dzimba* (We are not animals that burnt each other homes) destroying other people's property…The MDC should stop immediately this barbaric campaign of arson, destroying and harming people, destroying lives (*The Herald*, 30-05-08, p1).

First Lady, Grace Mugabe[38] reportedly weighed in saying:

> *Musarovana, musapisirana dzimba nekuti pamunorwisana varungu vanenge varikudzimba dzavo vachiona vachingoti onai vanhu vatema havafunge, havana kurongeka; sei vasingabatsire kana pakaitika matambudziko akadai*? (Don't beat up each other, don't burn each other's homes because when you fight the whites will be at home watching saying look at these black people, they don't think, they are not organised; why don't they help when such a tragedy happens*?*).

Condemnation of election violence was followed by blame on the alleged perpetrators (MDC-T) who are constructed as barbaric or uncivilised "Others", and therefore, deserving to be disciplined. The language used in this story bears resemblance with that used in another *Herald* story published a month before the 2002 presidential election whose headline read "Mugabe launches presidential drive" and had a cliff hanger which read "Shun violence, be on the lookout for political witches" (*The Herald*, 02-02-02, p1). President Mugabe reportedly told his party supporters at a rally in Mashonaland East province to shun violence and blamed the MDC and some Western sponsored-Non-Governmental organisations for fanning violence in the country. Mugabe told his supporters that they must "be on the lookout for political witches and those bent on provoking violence".

[37] See "Police warn MDC-T against violence" (The Herald, 09-07-13, p1)

[38] She was speaking, in Shona, the main indigenous language spoken in Zimbabwe.

The Herald reported thus:

> But he said they (his supporters) had the right to defend themselves if attacked in their homes by MDC supporters…President Mugabe warned people to be on the lookout for MDC which thrived on terror. He said even the call by the MDC leader, Mr Morgan Tsvangirai, to violently remove him from the office showed that it was a terrorist party (*The Herald*, 02-02-02, p1).

Like the privately-owned press, the condemnation of election violence in the state-owned press was accompanied by blame and the language used in the excerpts above demonstrates how this discourse of blame was enduring given the fact that the elections in question were separated by six years. As noted in Chapter Five, the reason why the condemnation of violence was followed by blame was because of the conviction by the ruling party that MDC perpetrated more violence than the ruling party. Consequently, apart from the voicing of Mugabe in the condemnation of election violence, there was a significant number of editorials devoted to the denunciation of election violence. Examples include: "MDC-T's violent campaign should stop" (*The Sunday* Mail, 01-06-08, p6) (**see Appendix, 1.14**) "Reject advocates of post-poll anarchy" (*The Sunday Mail*, 24-02-08, p6), "Tsvangirai a sick, dangerous man" (*The Herald*, 15-02-02, p8) and "We need peace, not violence" (*The Herald*, 01-03-02, p10).

The refrain in these editorials was that violence must be condemned "in the strongest terms" and went on to identify the perpetrators of violence as opposition MDC supporters. It was also pointed out that the motive for such violence was to discredit the elections. When a group of foreign election observers was attacked by what the private press identified as Zanu (PF) supporters (see Chapter Five) *The Herald* (01-03-02, p10) condemned the violence but argued that the supposed Zanu (PF) supporters were in fact a "force other than Zanu (PF)" because the ruling party had nothing to gain from attacking foreign election observers. The paper reported that:

> It follows therefore that those bent on tarnishing the name of Zanu (PF) are more likely to attack observers with the comforting knowledge that they will not get the blame… Attacking them (observers) is meant to frighten and sway their views ahead of the March 9 and 10 elections. It is good that they have reported the violence to the police and are not; in any way hysterical about it…It is in the interest of all Zimbabweans that violence of any kind stops forthwith. We cannot have our presidential election discredited and rejected by the outside world because of violence we know we can do without (*The Herald*, 01-03-02, p10).

Election violence thus became a turf for point-scoring characterised by blame and counter-blame, conspiracy and counter-conspiracy. This suggests that incidences of election violence are carefully selected and hyped, while others are swept under the carpet. One state-owned press editor sheds light on the way political polarisation led to opposing press camps selectively choosing to condemn particular incidents of election violence in order to de-legitimise rivals thus:

> *So what has really happened is that the media also, has been also like polarised, the media would tend to take positions aligning itself with those forces, forces that want to say the elections are free and fair, are legitimate and those that want to say, No, they are not free and free should the result not be according to plan. So what then you tend, tends to happen is, eh, even in the reportage of electoral violence you find that the tendency, when it happens is to want to apportion blame to say, no its Zanu (PF) that is violent, depending on the position of that media organisation. It's not just condemnation of violence but to then apportion…So if you find that when you then look at the state media, the public media that ideologically tends to lean and align itself with Zanu (PF), we are caught in that web of, of saying "Yaa, there is violence but it's not that bad, it does not really affect, the, the result" or even to say "Yaa it's the MDC that is violent, it has done ABCD". So there is a competition of saying who has perpetrated what violence* (E6, 12 May 2015).

As election violence became a tool for legitimising and de-legitimising the electoral process and verdicts the citizens were subjected to competing versions of reality, which possibly did not tally with their lived experiences. The implications are that the citizens were denied an opportunity to make meaningful decisions, thereby stunting the democracy.

The Chamisa and Madzore Cases

In order to illustrate how the state-owned press used the condemnation of election violence as a discursive strategy to de-legitimise the opposition two separate (but similar) events will be used. The first story was about the then spokesperson of the MDC-T, Mr. Nelson Chamisa who in the run-up to the 29 March, 2008 harmonised elections, allegedly told his party's supporters that MDC-T was going to engage in violence "similar to that which rocked in Kenya after the disputed December 27 (2007) polls if Zanu (PF) won the election" (*The Herald*, 28-02-08, p2) (**see Appendix 1.15**).

The statement was roundly criticised by Zanu (PF) and the state-owned press, although Chamisa denied having made the statement. The second example relates to the MDC-T National Youth Assembly chairperson, Mr Solomon Madzore, who allegedly told a gathering of supporters at the launch of the party's election campaign and manifesto for the 2013 harmonised elections in Marondera, that the MDC-T youths were "prepared to take up arms and shed their blood if his party lost the elections" (*The Herald*, 10-07-13, p10).

Like the Chamisa case, the main frame in the Madzore story was that of condemnation. In both cases the statements were described as "threats" to unleash violence by the opposition. Like Chamisa, Madzore reportedly refuted having made the statements and the language used by the state-owned press is that they were climbing down (or "backtracking" in the case of Madzore) (*The Herald*, 10-07-13, p2) from their positions. Although these incidents are separated by a period of five years (2008-2013) the similarity in their treatment by the state-owned press is striking.

The Herald (10-07-13, p14) had a story with the headline "Don't Make reckless political statements, Madzore warned" (**see Appendix 1.16**). The only source in the story, Air Force of Zimbabwe Commander, Air Marshal Perrence Shiri, reportedly chastised Madzore for "making reckless political statements that had the potential of destabilising the country", adding that such utterances were "foolish", "stretching the patience of the security forces to the limit" and "an insult to those charged with national security and all who waged the liberation struggle". He also said, "Why are you insulting us? Haven't we laid our guns down and allowed people to live peacefully, do their work in harmony? Do not force us to do that which we did not want to do" (*The Herald*, 10-07-13, p4). Condemnation was followed by threats of unspecified action against the perpetrators of violence.

In the Chamisa story, condemnation was followed by a pledge by the authorities to review the election process so that there were no "loopholes in the security of the process" and counter-threats to bring about "additional measures to thwart acts of political violence being planned against the electoral process".

In addition, Chinamasa warned "those who embark on violence during and after the election" that the full wrath of the law would "descend upon them". In both cases, the blameworthiness of the opposition was made to appear common cause by making reference to its past 'record' of election violence.

This is clearly illustrated in a *Herald* story with a headline "Police warn MDC-T against violence" (*The Herald* 09-07-13, p1) whereby the newspaper stated that:

> MDC-T has been implicated in several violent incidents countrywide that analysts said were designed to not only trash the political environment, but to create self-fulfilling prophecies ahead of the party's pending defeat in harmonised elections. The terror campaign began last year, but was intensified from January with over 48 cases being recorded country-wide since the beginning of the year. In all the recorded cases, the MDC-T supporters were at the forefront of attacking their colleagues or those from other political parties, especially Zanu (PF). Journalists were not spared. Mashudu Netsianda of Chronicle and Herbert Moyo of *The Zimbabwe Independent* fell victim to MDC-T thugs in separate incidents in Harare and Bulawayo. The attacks on journalists followed threats issued by MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai who rapped journalists and media houses that do not toe his party line, saying that they had no future in his perceived "new Zimbabwe" (*The Herald*, 09-07-13, p1).

The blame on the opposition is rationalised on the grounds of the opposition's politics of victimhood and the 'politics of pity'. *The Sunday Mail* Acting editor, Mabasa Sasa's statement below sheds some light.

> *What we do know is that the violence, having been started, ahmm, there is a political party that has thrived on that violence, with the politics of pity. One, claiming we are a victim. Aah, two, it gives them access to resources, saying, we need money to defend ourselves or whatever reason. So they get money. Three, it serves to de-legitimise the state. I do not think that Zanu (PF) would benefit as much from violence as MDC would, Zanu (PF) being a governing party, holding instruments of the state. It has nothing to gain by fighting people who have no instruments whatsoever. Whereas MDC stands to benefit the most from violence, one, by getting that pity, two, by financial support, three by de-legitimising the state. So on the whole I believe its MDC which has still to gain more and naturally we will then assume that, eh, they are responsible for a lot of that violence. A-ahmm, there have been allegations of ah, due to that, ah, external influence we get allegations of serious training of these people where they start getting, ah, they start using the same tactics used by the Selous Scouts (Rhodesian hit squad), very simple things , ah, you go and dress up in Zanu (PF) regalia, you beat up people. You are an MDC person, you wear a Zanu (PF) T-shirt, you cause violence, and it's blamed on Zanu (PF). So I really don't see Zanu (PF) having benefited much from violence whereas MDC it seems, it, violence became quite a cornerstone of the, of their national policy, the drive to get into power* (Interview with Mabasa Sasa, 14 May 2015, Harare).

A similar framing was echoed in a commentary with a headline "Madzore must remember he is out on bail" *(The Herald*, 12-07-13, p7) whereby Madzore, and by extension, the MDC's past record of election violence were reiterated. The newspaper reminded Madzore that he was on bail "on charges of murdering a police inspector" and that "One would have thought that the 14 months Madzore spent behind bars would have taught him a lesson". Thus Madzore was constructed as an unrepentant criminal who had a history of violence. Madzore's statements were linked up with the MDC leader's statement about forcibly removing Mugabe from power. The newspaper went on to tabulate the opposition party's past transgressions which include "50 cases of political violence committed since January" which were attributed to the opposition party and the attack on private and state-owned media journalists mentioned above was also mentioned to buttress the frame that the MDC had an unbridled 'history of violence'.

As already mentioned condemnation discourse slipped into a discourse of blame which found expression in recalling the opposition party's supposed previous record of election violence and its use of election violence as a strategy to discredit the elections. Typically, it was stated that: "We know that MDC-T is determined to spoil the prevailing peaceful environment in a bid to trash the political environment and to provide fodder for its Western allies to discredit the poll" (*The Herald*, 12-07-13, p7). In the larger discursive scheme, the condemnation of election violence paved way to the inflection of an endorsement discourse, whereby the legitimacy and credibility of the electoral outcome was deliberately hyped. This issue will be revisited in the last section of this chapter.

6.3 The Peace Discourse

6.3.1 Appeal for Peace and Anti-Violence

As pointed out earlier, a key issue that loomed large throughout the electoral contests which are the focus of this thesis was that the legitimacy of elections was tied to the existence or non-existence of election violence. As a consequence, the state-owned press stressed the discourse of peace, while the privately-owned press suppressed or ignored the ruling party's message of peace. To this extent, the state-owned press published numerous stories which voiced advocates of peace or anti-violence.

Three different frames were identified in this regard. The first frame relates to appeals for peace (or anti-violence frame). This frame is accorded more space in this section. The second frame relates to endorsements of the elections as peaceful, either before, during and after the vote. The sources attributed to the peace advocacy frame were mainly ruling party officials (principally President Mugabe whose campaign, theme during the 2013 harmonised elections was "Peace begins with me, peace begins with you, peace begins with all of us"), the police or other government officials who made appeals to the electorate to observe peace or "shun violence".[39]

[39] Examples of such news headlines include: "President repeats call for peaceful election" (The Herald, 30-01-02,p2), "Non-violence, land reform highlights of President's campaign" (The Herald, 26-02-02, p1),"Chihuri appeals for calm, peace" (The Herald, 28-06-00, p5), "Refrain from political violence" (The Herald, 14-07-00, p5), "Sikhanyiso Ndlovu urges supporters to refrain from violence" (The Herald, 07-06-00, p4) "Exercise political

For the state-owned press, being peaceful meant many things; it meant political maturity (*The Herald*, 05-02-08, p3), "shaming detractors" who always use election violence as an alibi for not accepting the electoral outcome (*The Sunday Mail*, 30-04-08, p6) or tolerance. Given that it was so important that the elections were seen to be peaceful, the peace message took centre stage in the state-press editorial columns as well. One such editorial was published in *The Sunday Mail* (24-04-00, p4) on the first polling day of the 2000 parliamentary elections and carried the headline "Let's shame our enemies by voting peacefully". The commentary exhorted the Zimbabwean electorate to vote peacefully in order to show "the whole world that Zimbabwe is a politically mature nation that is capable of holding peaceful, free, and fair elections". The newspaper added that:

> It is time that we put to shame the prophets of doom who have predicted chaos and anarchy during and in the aftermath of the elections. To many in the outside world, Zimbabwe is a disaster waiting to happen. Although they are not saying it, we know that some of the so-called observers are hoping to witness a bloodbath. This will give them the satisfaction of saying 'we told you so' (*The Herald*, 24-06-00, p4).

The view that the message of peace was used to neutralise the negative perceptions about the country internationally is further demonstrated in another *Herald* editorial titled "Election 2000: Peaceful atmosphere must continue", (*The Herald*, 26-06-00, p6) where it was argued that "The outside world cannot but be impressed by the businesslike way that Zimbabweans went out this week to choose their new parliament. External observers have already commented favourably on the standard measures taken by the Zimbabwean authorities to prevent any suspicion of rigging" (*The Herald*, 26-06-00, p6). In this discursive scheme peace was not only equated to the absence of violence, but also translated to free and fair elections.

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maturity" (The Herald, 05-02-08, p3), "Calmness should continue" (The Herald, 31-03-08, p4), "Election 2000: Peaceful atmosphere must continue" (26-06-00, p6), "Lets shame our enemies by voting peacefully" (The Herald, 24-06-00, p4), "Sekeramayi calls for peaceful polls", (The Herald, 20-05-00, p1), "Pull together on a peaceful path" (The Herald, 03-04-08, p4), "Lets campaign, vote peacefully" (16-02-08, p4), "Let there be after-election peace" (The Sunday Mail, 30-04-08, p6), "Exercise restraint, work towards peaceful poll" (The Sunday Mail, 20-03-05, p8), "Lets promote violence-free polls" (The Herald, 02-02-08, p4), "Reject advocates of post-poll anarchy" (The Sunday Mail, 24-02-08, p9), "Zero tolerance to violence" (The Sunday Mail,30-03-08, p7).

A close inspection of interview data reveals that the rationale for emphasizing peace in the state-owned press rests on a combination of moral justifications, professional considerations and political imperatives such as the national interest. The following statement from a journalist who works for a state-owned newspaper is illustrative:

> *That, eeh, as I mentioned earlier, we always try to seek the national interest, yah. We always, there is also advocacy journalism. Violence is something that the nation does not need. So as a paper we need to be responsible. So whatever politician they are, if we feel that this is not what the country needs, yah, sure, you are not going to let your relationship with them determine how you are going to cover, if there is any incident of violence because this is going to affect the perception of the country internationally, regionally and even continentally. So we are trying to safeguard that national interest. We are also going to preserve social fabric where you don't want people to maim each other. Yah, because you also come from homes, you don't want your human capital be affected in any way. Because as a newspaper, we are also responsible journalists. Yah, and we try to advocate good things, yah, good morals, good behaviour, so that is what we always try to project, yah. So in a nutshell I don't think the relationships we might have with particular politicians might affect the way we perceive things. We don't condone bad things just to preserve our friendship* (J1, State Press Journalist, 04-09-13, Harare).

This sentiment is echoed by Mabasa Sasa, the Acting Editor of *The Sunday Mail* who argues that:

> *I would say there are primarily two issues that come to the fore. The first is that any publication, any serious publication that has its country's best interest at heart will certainly promote peace. This goes whether peace is prevailing or there is a threat to that peace or there has recently been violence. Naturally if you are a reputable organization, certainly you would want to promote peace, peace being the bedrock for development, peace being a foundation for growth, for economic growth. So whether there is an election or an election is coming peace should remain a major issue within a discourse of publications. Secondly, within particular contexts of ah, electoral contests over the past ah, I could say 15 years, there have been a lot of umm, lots of threats to peace, to stability, to development, so naturally, we then have to step in and promote peace. This political context is informed by active attempts to destabilise the country. We felt that there was or is an active agenda to destabilise the country for whatever political purposes of those behind that agenda. And for us being a public paper our, our interest would be promoting stability rather than promoting anarchy. So within the past 15 years there was greater call for publications to promote peace, a-mm at the same time, it was also an attempt to counter, to counterbalance ah, ah, reports of instability in Zimbabwe, reports that ah, would serve to paint the image of the country, that of a pariah essentially which any sane person would see kuti (that) does not dovetail with our national aspirations for development, for unity, for tranquility. So we also had to actively counter those reports for the sake of our own development* (Interview with Mabasa Sasa, 14 May 2015, Harare).

Clearly, political imperatives took precedence over all other considerations in the sense that agitations for peace were fixated on placating the international community- a very fastidious constituency at the material time. *Herald* editor, Ceasar Zvayi's comments corroborate this view:

> *The Herald is a-a, influenced, is public media, 51% owned by the government and our editorial policy is to follow the flag, whenever it's a case of Zimbabwe and the world, our thrust is we follow the flag, our flag. So we are generally supportive, but not blindly supportive of the government of the day. So over the past, since the turn of the millennium there has been political contestation in Zimbabwe pitting the Zanu (PF) led government against its erstwhile allies after the fallout over land reforms. So you find out that after that fallout, the Western governments sponsored a political opposition in Zimbabwe and they have been trying to effect regime change and it's on record, they have been trying to depose the Zanu (PF) government. So to them, whenever its election time in Zimbabwe they always try, their media, they sponsor certain newspapers here in Zimbabwe, the privately owned newspapers that support the opposition, the South African apartheid press, the remnants of it and the international media. They always try to paint a picture of a crisis here in Zimbabwe to create self-fulfilling prophecies so that they will reject the electoral outcome. Because as we know Zanu (PF), because as we know Zanu (PF) has been dominating the political scene up to the last election. So there is always a campaign to fabricate images, images imported from other countries. We have cases of images that were imported from Kenya with some people trying to pass them off as violence in some outpost in Zimbabwe. They imported images from Ethiopia of malnourished children and tried to pass them off as the situation in Zimbabwe. So we always, there is always these contrived situations. So as The Herald we work closely with the police. We always try to check these reports against the official record and that is why we always say, we always try to emphasize that the environment that is prevailing, contrary to what is portrayed by these embedded media, its peaceful, let people vote peacefully so that the outcome itself, as has been happening over the years is endorsed as legitimate. But you find out that the Westerners always reject, they always try to create these self-fulfilling prophecies. Like right now, Zimbabwe is peaceful, Robert Mugabe has been elected Chairman of SADC and the AU but Tsvangirai is in Germany right now claiming that there is a crisis in Zimbabwe. He is going all over the world to drum…So this is where you find The Herald in the middle. The Herald is ranged against these international media trying to tar and feather Zimbabwe and The Herald is the only voice out of Zimbabwe trying to give that correct political picture. So that is why we always…basically, we do not fabricate this, we tell it what exactly it will be happening on the ground* (Interview with Ceasar Zvayi, 07-05-15, Harare).

It is instructive to note that constructions of the peace discourse in the state-owned press have everything to do with their perception that election violence has become a tool in an asymmetrical war pitting proxies of neo-colonial forces and a powerless developing country. Emphasis on peace is necessitated by the imperative to foster particular perceptions about the social and political reality in Zimbabwe. From a theoretical perspective this is significant to this study in the sense that it recalls the agenda-setting effect and the framing effect of the press (McCombs 2005, 546) whereby "elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent over time on the public agenda". By foregrounding peace while suppressing violence, the state-owned press sought to transfer salience from the press to the public domain. This is because, although the press may not be successful in telling people what to think it can be successful in telling people what to think about and how to think about particular issues (McCombs 2005, 546). Of particular interest to this thesis is how the state-press sought to create the perception that peace was reigning during election time and the causal link between the peace message and the electoral verdict. This harks back to Entman's framing theory which entails selecting "some aspects of social reality and make them salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described"(cited in McCombs 2005, 546).

As demonstrated below, when the state-owned press chose to emphasize the peace message they initiated a causal link between the shrill calls for peace and a free and fair electoral verdict, thereby bringing to the fore the view advanced in Chapter Two, that discourse is a social construct and all discursive practices entail some form of framing. Just like framing discourse "is created and perpetuated by those who have power and means of communication" (Pistoe and Letseka 2013, 4). The argument advanced here is that the social construction of peace was calculated to project a version of social reality or (to put it in a Foucauldian parlance) a particular "regime of truth" consistent with the grand political scheme and design of the state press. Within that grand scheme was the desire for the elections to be accepted as a credible and a legitimate expression of the will of the people.

Predictably the advocacy for peace gave way to a flurry of endorsements on the electoral verdict (second frame of peace) and euphoric declarations that the elections would be or had been peaceful or free even when other voices were saying something to the contrary. Hence, there were news headlines such as "SA hails peace in Zimbabwe ahead of elections" (*The Herald*, 24-07-13, p2), "Chiefs endorse Zim poll preps"(*The Herald*, 07-03-05, p1), "SADC reaffirms endorsement"(*The Herald*, 03-09-13, p1), "Polls free and fair: SADC, AU"(*The Herald*, 04-04-05, p1), "Zimbabweans endorse election"(*The Herald*, 28-06-08, p6), "More observer teams endorse Zim polls" (*The Herald*, 05-04-08, p1). There were also more interpretative headlines such as "Violence does not preclude fair poll: Mbeki" (*The Herald*, 24-06-00, p3) where it was stated that election violence did not mean that elections were not free and fair.

To bolster his argument Mbeki drew parallels between the violence in Zimbabwe and South Africa in 1994 where about 1000 people died in the run-up to South Africa's first democratic elections, and yet the election was declared free and fair. This clearly attests the point made earlier that discourse has consequences in the sense that the tendentious discourses on peace in the state-owned press were designed to fit into the template of a credible election. This version was contradicted by the privately-owned press which was cynical of the prospects of peace.

6.3.2 Silence and Cynicism

For all the elections held between 2000 and 2013 the state-owned press's campaign for peace did not find any takers among the privately-owned press. If anything, it was met with disdain, downplayed or completely suppressed in the media discourse, particularly during the harmonised elections held in 2013. The privately-owned press deliberately avoided the word 'peace' even where they were reporting on peace initiatives or activities framed as such, rather preferring the phraseology "anti-violence", thus stressing violence and not peace. Two such examples are taken from elections that are separated by more than a decade. One is from the 2000 general election and the other from the 2013 harmonised election. The 2000 election story was a lead story in the *Daily News* of 8 June 2000 whose headline was "Top Zanu (PF) leaders call for end to violence".

The story was about a meeting convened by some top Zanu (PF) leaders to drum up the message to their supporters that "violence against the opposition must stop and that the 24 and 25 June (2000) election must be seen to be free and fair". The import of this interpretation is that the Zanu (PF) leadership was preaching an "anti-violence" message to their supporters and not a peace message. The phrase "anti-violence" connotes that there is violence taking place and that it must stop, it might also mean people should not contemplate committing violence.

One of the top politicians reportedly told party supporters that "We should tell our followers not to use violence…We should campaign by convincing people- not by fighting them and beating them up", (*Daily News*, 08-06-00) a message which implies that some of the supporters might have been engaging in election violence. Another leader reportedly said, "We have stood firm against violence. But we must make an unequivocal statement to denounce violence not because we want to appease anyone".

The *Daily News* then introduced an interpretative frame where it was suggested that the reason why Zanu (PF) was preaching against violence was that "the eagle eye of international observers monitoring the election would be riveted on Zimbabwe and any irregularity would be capitalised on to declare the poll not free and fair". Foregrounding violence rather than peace shows that the *Daily News* was skeptical about the prospects of peace.

The second example is a story published in *Newsday* (15-07-13, p3) which had the headline "Churches take peace message to rural areas" and was about a peace-building initiative workshop held in a rural village in the Midlands province. The newspaper described the workshop as a "fight against violence" and described the main presentation at the workshop as centred on denouncing "political violence". A close inspection of the story reveals that the main thrust of the workshop was to "preach the gospel of peace" (*Newsday*, 15-07-15, p3). Most of the people who spoke at the workshop foregrounded peace and the word peace was used 8 (eight times). "The search for peace cannot be postponed, be belittled or trivialised at a time when our nation is at the cross-roads", said the main presenter at the workshop. By choosing to emphasise violence as opposed to peace the newspaper showed some scepticism. This scepticism gradually morphed into cynicism in other privately-owned newspapers as succinctly shown in an editorial titled "Not the lull before the storm" published in the *Daily News* (29-06-00, p10).

The newspaper noted how, in a televised address, after the 2000 constitutional referendum, President Mugabe had graciously conceded defeat before violence broke out in the June 2000 elections. The *Daily News* opined that the tranquility which was being experienced after the 2000 general elections was possibly a bad omen for more violence to come, given Zanu (PF)'s history of insincerity and trickery. The newspaper wrote that:

> The future looks bleak unless Mugabe is sincere in his declaration to seek "greater unity and stability, cutting across race and in building institutions which serve the people". This is the same man who said white farmers had become "the enemies of the state", a man who sounded so filled with bigotry he frightened many people, including foreigners. He will have to work very hard to convince many people in Zimbabwe that his word is now his bond. So far he has failed that test dismally (*Daily News*, 29-06-00, p10).

The perception that ruling party politicians were not sincere in their peace campaigns might be the reason why, to a large measure the privately-owned press muffled or were cynical about the peace discourse which dominated the state-owned press pages during elections held between 2000 and 2013. Geoff Nyarota, who edited the *Daily News* at the time, sheds more light on this when he says that:

> *I would say if you detect any amount of scepticism on the part of the Daily News as a newspaper, in the face of utterances about the prospects of peace and non-violence it is because the paper was weighing these utterances against its own observations. If MP Border Gezi, may his soul rest in peace, stated in public that there will be no violence, that there will be, you know, peace, the Daily News was likely to say but Cde Border Gezi said the opposite last week, and acted in a manner that does not lend credibility to his new utterances. This was on the basis of observation. Now if the MDC claimed that its members had been violently attacked and produced evidence and these were indeed its members and the MDC produced evidence that the attackers or the perpetrators were Zanu (PF) or vice-versa. If Zanu (PF) alleged that its members had been attacked by the MDC, because that also happens and produced such evidence, and the MDC says we are a non-violent party, well the newspaper, on the basis of its own observation, its own findings would be right to be cynical about such claims especially, if they contradict its observations* (Interview with Geoff Nyarota, 11 May, 2015, Harare).

The private newspapers justified their cynicism about the calls for peace by ruling party politicians on the grounds that the peace message by Zanu (PF) politicians did not commensurate with their actions. The private press saw insincerity in their appeals for peace based on previous records of the politicians. In other words they felt that the politicians were speaking with "forked tongues". Because of this mistrust any appeals for peace by Zanu (PF) were sneered at regardless of the circumstances. It is, therefore, not surprising that even during the 2013 harmonised election, which is generally regarded as a peaceful election (Raftopoulos 2013, Comesa, 2013, African Union Commission 2013, Electoral Commission of SADC Countries 2013) the private press maintained a cynical stance towards the peace message. An example is an editorial published in *Newsday* (19-07-13, 10) titled "How sincere are Mugabe's calls" (**see Appendix 1.17**). The editorial queried why merely 24 hours after Mugabe's rally in the dormitory town of Chitungwiza, where he preached peace and tolerance during the elections, "seven MDC-T officials…were brutally attacked by alleged Zanu (PF) supporters in the same town where Mugabe had addressed his rally. The editorial cast aspersions on Mugabe's sincerity in his call for peace on account of this single incident, asking rhetorically:

> Is Mugabe speaking white, but acting black, indicating left while turning right, preaching peace but acting war? Or has he lost control of Zanu (PF) and his grassroots supporters no longer take him seriously- a sign that may signal Mugabe, turning 90 next February, is now a spent force rumbling what no longer resonates with the thinking of his followers? (Newsday, 19-07-13, p10).

The newspaper added that "grandstanding and preaching mixed messages should not be condoned in any circumstances", an indication that the newspaper doubted the sincerity of President Mugabe's message for peace.

Wisdom Mudzungairi, the acting editor of the *Newsday* explains why his paper received the peace message by Zanu (PF) politicians during the 2013 harmonised elections with scepticism:

> *We don't have to take hook, line and sinker what, what the politicians say. In any case if you believe in a politician then either you are a fool or you don't know exactly what you should be doing as a journalist. Journalists must be skeptical about anything, even if somebody brings a story to you and tells you this is what is happening elsewhere you must be skeptical. You don't have to take everything on face value. You have to go deeper and then say ah, is this also true that this happened? Ok, that's one aspect. The second aspect is that Mugabe has been president since; I mean he has been ruling the country since 1980. He has got a history of trickery and because of that why should we believe his word when there is no action. Remember this was the same period, eh, Mugabe, eh, was going to attend and AU (African Union) meeting in about, ah, ah, the political situation in Zimbabwe in Tanzania and then Tsvangirai was addressing a rally in Gwanzura (stadium) and then he was beaten by the police and the security, the other security forces, and then the same day Chamisa tried to run away from the country and he was beaten seriously at the Airport and the same old man also went to Tanzania, to go and meet, discuss the political situation in the country and what does he say there? He says he (Tsvangirai) was beaten to the pulp. This is what he was telling reporters in Tanzania. On arrival and when he came back he says, no, no let's have peace. Now you see you are talking to a double-tongued somebody who doesn't believe in the other, who doesn't believe in discussions to solve problems. He believes in violence and Mugabe is on record saying Zanu (PF) has degrees in violence and that's what he said, and is on record on that one. So whenever he calls for peace why should…we must be skeptical.* (Interview with Wisdom Mudzungairi, 15 May 2015, Harare).

It is instructive to note that the basis the scepticism about the call for peace is informed by selected historical accounts about the private press's past experiences and interactions with ruling party politicians as well as journalistic attributes consistent with the watchdog function whereby the press is expected to hold public officials to account. As noted earlier the watchdog role of the press is adversarial and distrustful of political authority.

The necessity of the press to question authority in journalism is clearly enunciated by Dumisani Muleya when he says that:

> *…you see, people don't operate in a vacuum, people have histories, they have patterns of behaviour. When politicians tell us that, because most of the time, in the first place they are the sources of the problem. They don't exclusively cause violence but largely they incite violence they themselves. So when they turn around and say no more violence, no more this, we report what they say but skeptically so, because we tend to think that they are not being honest because we have seen them acting, eh, eh, eh, this, what do they say in South Africa? We have seen them indicating right and turning left, so in other words they have double standards. Eh, we do not trust them all that much and in any case Journalism is based quite a lot on scepticism most of the time, particularly things official, report them fairly, accurately, but be skeptical about them because you do not want to end up being a tabula rassa, eh, we use an approach that is based on scepticism because that way you are able to question how, since Mugabe is calling for an end to violence when he has been mainly the chief instigator of violence. He has used electoral violence to gain power, he has used electoral violence to consolidate power and maintain power. So why should we believe him this time around?* (Interview with Dumisani Muleya, 11 May, 2015, Harare.

These sentiments demonstrate that privately-owned journalists hold pre-conceived ideas about ruling party politicians whom they regard as dishonest, people with double standards, and therefore lacking in integrity. Naturally, they are bound to be dismissive of their peace messages. With such a background it is also not difficult to appreciate why, when the private press discredited the electoral verdicts, the main basis for that, (with the exception of the 2013 harmonised elections)[40], was that the alleged prevalence of "coercion"[41] (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 15-03-2002, p6).

[40] In 2013 the justification for discrediting the elections was mainly to do with electoral irregularities other than violence. For example "Peaceful vote marred by anomalies"(Daily News, 03-08-13, p11) "EU says Zim poll peaceful, withholds judgement on fairness" (Newsday, 03-08-13, p4), "Sadc, AU blast 'flawed poll'(Newsday, 03-08-13, p3), "Free but not fair"(The Zimbabwe Independent, 02-08-13, p8), "Polls may be peaceful, not fair- ZDI" (Newsday, 29-07-13, p5)

Tellingly, the competing versions of reality constructed by the state-owned and the privately-owned press on the advocacy for peace bring to light the issue of how the press exercises its discretionary power to construct particular versions of reality. It also shows that concepts such "violence" and "peace" are invested with hegemonic and counter-hegemonic value. While the state-owned press positioned themselves as moral agents in the national interest the privately-owned press was cynical about the Zanu (PF)'s sincerity in the appeal for peace. The implication of this is that the reportage of election violence became a terrain for strategically managing news and representations. To this extent Wolsfeld's (1992) arguments about the role of the media in situations of unequal power come to mind. He argues that in an unequal conflict, the weaker party must find ways of "bringing third parties to the conflict on its side in order to create a more equal balance of power" (Wolfsfeld 1992, 1). He adds that in that scenario the media play a critical role to bring the case to the public agenda so that other third parties can also respond (Wolfsfeld 1991, 2).

The view of this thesis is that the two press camps became part of the conflict between the opposition and the ruling party. Onyebadi and Oyedeji (2011, 226) also made similar observations to those of Wolfsfeld when they concluded that the press's role during the 2007 Kenyan election fluctuated from incitement of violence to 'moral witnesses' when political violence broke out in December 2007. The findings in this chapter suggest a consistent pattern of competing discursive constructions of reality which is motivated by ideological differences. This has got wider implications for democracy.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to discuss three themes emanating from the textual data and interviews with media practitioners from the state-owned and the privately-owned newspapers. The three themes examined are memorialisation, condemnation and peace advocacy. The two press camps constructed contrasting versions of reality in relation to election violence which speak to their diametrically opposed ideological values. Different discursive strategies were deployed to construct a reality of election violence that either legitimised or de-legitimised the electoral process and the outcome. The competing versions of reality constructed by the press in the context of Zimbabwean elections brings to the fore new ways of thing thinking about election violence and the role of the press in the mediation of electoral violence. The findings in this chapter throw open conceptions of election violence in that the meaning of election violence depends on who is invoking it and for what purpose or under what condition.

From a theoretical standpoint the discursive constructions on memorialisation and condemnation of election violence and advocacy for peace are significant in so far as they bring under the spotlight the fact that the press does not report news, nor does it reflect on social reality, but constructs particular regimes of truth circumscribed by given socio-political considerations. This has far reaching implications for reporting political conflict and raises questions about the efficacy of the liberal democratic normative model on the role of the media in societies saddled by social and political cleavages. Normative prescriptions about the role of the press in a democracy are pivoted on the presumption that the press reports the "truth" and furnish the citizenry with information to make informed choices. If what the press produces is anything but versions of reality the implications are that the role of the press's role in a democracy needs continuous rethinking. The next chapter examines citizen discourses on election violence and its mediation.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CITIZEN DISCOURSES ON ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the discursive constructions of electoral violence by selected Zimbabwean citizens who live in the capital city, Harare in order to gain insights into how citizens vocalise their conceptions and experiences of election violence. Empirical data was obtained from a corpus of text from transcripts of interviews with twenty-one participants who are regular readers of the mainstream newspapers in Zimbabwe. The texts were subjected to discourse analysis using the hermeneutic approach (see Chapter Three).

The analysis was aimed at mapping out particular discursive themes and narratives about the way in which citizens conceive and experience election violence in real life and in the press and how those experiences are projected through language. Theoretically the analysis is pivoted on the social constructionist epistemology which posits that language does not merely reflect the world and social phenomena but constructs and shapes "ideas, social processes and phenomena that make up our social world" (Nikander 2006, 2). McGregor (2003, 2) rightly posits that discourse analysis "challenges us to move from seeing language as abstract to seeing our words as having meaning in a particular historical, social and political condition". The chapter addresses three key questions namely:

- How do citizens make sense of electoral violence in Zimbabwe?
- How do citizens assess and evaluate press discursive constructions of electoral violence?
- What normative roles do the citizens prescribe for the press in relation to election violence?

Guided by these questions a number of discourses and sub-discourses that speak to the way in which citizens construct their experiences of election violence or their assessments of press reporting of election violence were identified. The main discourses discussed in this chapter revolve around citizen conceptions of election violence, citizen assessments of press reporting of election violence, the influence of press reporting of election violence on citizens and citizen prescriptions on election violence. Theses discourses constitute a significant shift in the way in which we think about citizens in the sense that, although their interpretations remain in the private domain, citizens become privileged social actors capable of critically engaging with the press, thereby altering current thinking about the political communication process.

7.2 The Respondents

The purposive sampling strategy employed in this thesis implies that the selection of participants was informed by predetermined considerations that are in line with the objectives of the study. For instance, the readership of newspapers, particularly those published in the English language required above basic functional literacy skills. Participants for this study had a minimum of Ordinary Level education, with the highest level of education being a Master's Degree. Participants read newspapers from across the media regularly and all of them read more than one newspaper. The majority of participants read almost all the printed newspapers published in Zimbabwe at the time of the study. A few of them read the online versions of the mainstream Zimbabwean newspapers and other online news sources that focus on Zimbabwe. Among my respondents were an airtime vendor, a university lecturer, a teacher, a priest, a business woman, a medical student, and a laboratory technician.

As mentioned in Chapter Three respondents were assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. **Figure 7.1** below outlines in graphic form the newspapers that the participants read for news and information about elections in Zimbabwe.[42]

[42] The values indicated in the graph reflect the number of times a specific newspaper was mentioned by participants as constituting a source of news and information about elections in Zimbabwe and not necessarily a popularity of a particular newspaper.

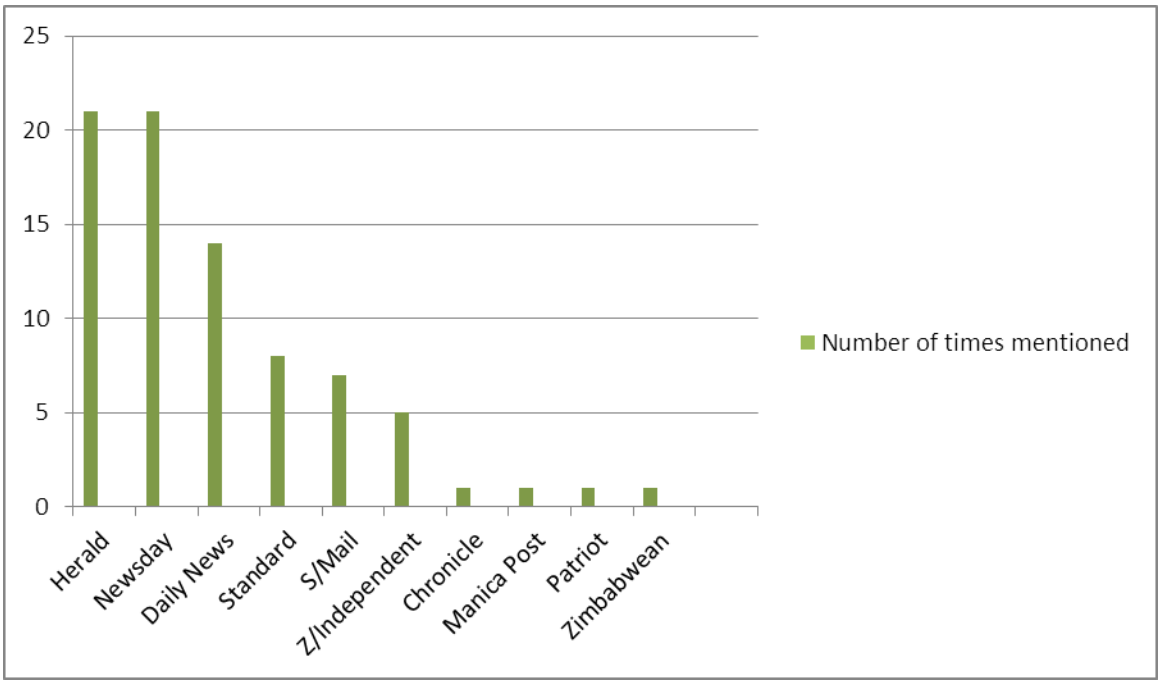

Figure 7.1: **Newspapers** ***read by participants for news and information on elections.***

As shown in *Figure* 7.1 above, *The Herald* and *Newsday* had the highest number of 'mentions' having been mentioned by all the 21 respondents. This is followed by the *Daily News* (14), *The Standard* (8), *The Sunday Mail* (7), *The Zimbabwe Independent* (5) and *The Chronicle, Manica Post*[43], *The Patriot* and *The Zimbabwean* were all mentioned once (1).

Although the question on newspapers read was primarily meant as an entry point for substantive discussion about press reporting on election violence, it also served to validate the rationale for selecting newspapers from which archival textual material analysed in Chapters Five and Six was drawn. The specific question asked was "which newspapers do you read for news and information on elections in Zimbabwe?" It must however, be borne in mind that this was by no means an attempt at a public opinion survey on the most read or the most popular newspaper, but rather an indication of the off the cuff responses about the newspapers participants read to access news and information about elections.

[43] The Chronicle and The Manica Post are mainly distributed in Matabeleland and Manicaland provinces respectively and less in the capital Harare where the interviews were conducted.

As no survey questionnaire was used respondents were not obliged to mention any specific number of newspapers they read for news and information about elections, but could only mention those that came to mind without probing. The open ended nature of the question meant that respondents could either preface their list with a statement such as "I read all the newspapers" or they could first attempt to list them, but could realise that they read many newspapers and then they would say "I can say I read all the newspapers". Be that as it may, this information provides an insight on newspapers that shape public opinion on elections in Zimbabwe.

7.3 Making Sense of Election Violence: Citizen Perspectives

Some of the respondents used language in a particular way to construct their conceptions and perceptions about the reality of election violence in the Zimbabwean context. They talked about their experiences of election violence, the nature of election violence, causes of election violence, perpetrators of election violence and responsibility for election violence, all of which were conveyed through certain linguistic constructs that speak to their social and political context. Although respondents foregrounded physical violence, they also talked about non-physical manifestations of election violence. They used a repertoire of words to describe their experiences of election violence and to distinguish its physical from its non-physical forms. In the words of one respondent:

> *There is violence which is silent violence, like some form of a cold war where you don't notice how violent these people are, but they will be sabotaging everything which led to our economy falling down, but they were not physical, but the impact was felt nationwide that something somewhere is happening, sabotage, something like that. Whereas the physical part of it resulted in people losing their homes, farms and so forth, where people destroyed things just for political reasons. So it has negatively impacted on the development of the country*. *(C1).*

Respondents construct election violence as both visible and invisible but its destructive effects are widespread rather than localised. Election violence is also constructed as signifying loss and destruction.

This conception of election violence has close affinity to classifications by Fisher (2002), Albert (2007) and Reif (2012) who view election violence as encompassing physical, psychological and structural elements of election violence and other forms of coercion. Respondents thus viewed election violence in a much wider sense and highlighted its multiple dimensions. The following statements illustrate this:

My understanding of election violence, it's any abuse, physical abuse, intimidation as well. Basically, any utterance or anything, that is said or if you are forced to do something. For me that's eeh, violence, because you are going against my, my, my will. Aha. If I don't volunteer to do something but I am forced to do something, then that violence as far as I am concerned. Aha (C11).

My understanding of election violence is forcing somebody to think the way you think. Maybe you are forcing that person through fighting, or beating him or using words through scolding that person or labeling him, or giving him names, maybe you might say the person is illiterate or whatever just because you want him to think the way you think. For me that is election violence (C2).

My understanding of election violence is fighting between competing political parties. This fighting might be singing parody songs directed at an opponent usually who will have been defeated. The victors will sing songs that lampooning the losers. This verbal or vocal violence which has the potential to degenerate into physical or even arsenal violence which can destroy human life. You see, or even infrastructure. It destroys. So it has far reaching consequences (C9).

Words such as "fighting", "beating", "forcing" , "coercion", "brutal", and "burnt", "arsenal" connote physical electoral violence which is destructive, what Reif (2012, 6) refers to as "noisy" or "observable physical and "observable coercion" which he distinguishes from "quiet" or non-physical and unobservable election violence". "Quiet" electoral violence is signified by such words and phrases as "intimidation", "forcing someone to think", "scolding", "giving names", "lampooning", "verbal", "vocal" and "labeling". Thus election violence is more than just the infliction of physical harm as it is also perpetrated through verbal communication or silent forms. These narratives show that election violence transcends visible physical violence which is often highlighted by the press. Citizen narratives on election violence view election violence through a wider lens and they are borne out of the lived experiences and memory of the citizens.

Their narratives bear the imprints of victimhood, but also of moral witnesses to the destructive impulses of election violence. The following statement illustrates this:

> *From my own point of view, from my experience, actually it was back in 2002 when I personally experienced election violence which took place in the neighbourhood where I was staying back in Kwekwe, where houses were burnt. My own grandfather's place was burnt down. Actually, it was a group of Zanu (PF) youth who would try to coerce you if your political affiliation was different. They would coerce you to support their party using different means like brutal means or otherwise. That's how the violence comes in. And the two parties would end up fighting for support through that form of coercion. So for me election violence involves two sides, actually multiple sides (C1).*

Respondents were able to remember and reconstruct incidences of election violence which happened many years back because they personally experienced and witnessed them. As privileged discursive actors, they are able to dissect the beast that election violence with the authority of experts. Thus election violence is viewed as a product of unhealthy political competition. The use of the second person and indeterminate pronouns, "you" and your" in the statement "*who would try to coerce you if your political affiliation was different. They would coerce you to support their party using different means like brutal means or otherwise",* signify that the election violence was indiscriminate. It might also mean that some respondents were afraid to mention the names of the perpetrators or victims of violence, thus underscoring the subterranean nature of election violence. Thus citizen narratives about election violence were bounded by the political context. It is, however, instructive, to note that unlike Reif (2012) who conceives election violence as both a spontaneous and organic phenomenon, citizen narratives in this thesis mainly accentuate election violence as an organised activity. Respondents' stories about election violence were replete with words that underscore the currency of intrigue, subterfuge, and the machinations and manipulative antics of an invisible third force.

The statements below demonstrate this instrumental logic of election violence:

> *But also even if we look at the level of violence that happened it wasn't like nationwide violence. It was in certain…here and there. And also even planned violence, planned violence, a way whereby people don't just* ***haphazardly get*** *pushed into a corner so that they become violent. The violence is* ***well planned*** *by people who want* ***to achieve certain objectives.*** *Either way, either party,* ***you know is planned****.* ***It's planned*** *for by people because people in this country eeh, if you take away their things they will just say let it be so, they just get pained. But violence in this country is* ***well orchestrated; it's planned*** *for by people taking advantage of the unemployed youths, take advantage of hunger during difficult times, taking advantage of their ignorance* (C15).

> *It seems Zimbabwe is a peace-loving country but* ***there is a group of people who are only being used by*** *these political leaders in* ***orchestrating violence****. So what I would think would improve the situation through the media is to expose those elements, where, whoever is trying to* ***orchestrate*** *violence should be exposed. The public should know about what they are doing, so that they would not go ahead and cause such troubles for the country. At the moment the media are not doing this because they are afraid of exposing some political party leaders and so forth. They only report along their political allegiance* (C1).

> *There are* ***certain individuals in every country****, everywhere, who…There are people who will always be violent. Right? And there are people who are lazy. So when you get a combination of laziness and a violent character now… And somebody who wants to get into power, that equation now it will stir violence because this lazy person now, all they want is money now… He brings now, hoards of people, now and then violence starts. So it's just like something that is in every human being that there is always a certain quota of people who are violent and lazy. But because we do not have an industry; that's a problem now, when you have idle people. They can* ***easily be influenced because somebody says*** *"I will give you 50 dollars, you know, I will buy you beer, wear this T-Shirt, Dad lets go, I want you to be dancing the whole night, you will be dancing you know, spreading posters. Like even yesterday, the MDC trucks they were moving, you could see that these guys at the back of the pickup they are all drunk…* (C13).

> *They* ***are being influenced****,* ***they are being influenced.*** *As far as I am concerned no one can just come and go outside without an* ***incentive****. They are given some incentives to do that. And then when they are arrested, somebody is going to pay for them. Yeah, the party, yeah. If they could have done as what as what eh, eh, a person like Joyce Mujuru actually said in Bindura at one time. She actually stood up, after the 2008, eh, eh general election and she said; if somebody is sending you to go and beat somebody do not think that the party is going to do something for you.*

> *Two, do not think that the person who has sent you is going to be arrested, it's you. According to our Shona culture, ngozi inouya kwauri iwewe wauraya (an avenging spirit will go and torment the person who has killed and not the person who sent him). You see. Mukangange muchitumwa imi vakomana muchienda muchienda kunouraya vanhu imhosva yenyu. Wazvionaka iwe (If you are being send to kill by someone it's your fault. Do you see that? Don't be sent by somebody to kill because nemhaka yekuti unoda nhanikire (because you want, I mean) He sends you to kill and you are culpable. Kanazve iwe ukasungwa uyu haasungwe uyu, nokuti (If you are arrested the person* ***who sent you*** *will not be arrested, because…) the police will just arrest the person who has committed the crime, not the person who sent you. Because unoramba, unoti handina kumbomutuma ini (Because he will deny responsibility. He will say* ***I did not send him****). You can't produce evidence that* ***you were sent****. So these people knew that the people who committed crimes were* ***being send by other people,*** *Wazviona? (You see?)* ***(C5).***

Citizens project election violence as isolated and coordinated thus accentuating the instrumentality of election violence. The instrumental discourse underscores the lack of agency by perpetrators of election violence. The instrumental logic of election violence projected in this thesis speaks to the very contextual circumstances of fragile societies whereby election violence is underpinned by rent-seeking behaviour. This shows that discourse is circumscribed by context, suggesting that the participants' discursive constructions of electoral violence are shaped by their socio-political context. The statements above are replete with words and phrases which not only suggest that election violence is organised, but also that people who commit election violence lack agency. Such words and phrases include, "being used", "being influenced", "easily influenced", "given incentives" "sent to kill" and "being send by other people". The lack of agency by perpetrators of election violence resonates with findings by scholars like Mueller (2013) who has documented how violent gangs and vigilante groups controlled by the state and opposition politicians in Kenya were mobilised to intimidate, kill, maim and displace opponents before and during elections between 1990 and 2007. De Smedt (2009,595) also notes how the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by Raila Odinga in Kenya mobilised youthful gangs in the slum residence of Kibera to loot and destroy opponent Kikuyu shops and houses in return for rewards and advantages symptomatic of a "patron-client" relationship and politics of the "big Man" (De Smedt 2009, 595). This demonstrates that perpetrators of election violence are in the majority of cases organised and sponsored. However, the Kenyan experience shows that political principals, be they state or individual politicians may lose control or

sponsorship of their gangs, in which case they take "a life of their own" or become " virtual shadow states" resulting in the state losing its "legitimate monopoly of force" (De Smedt 2009, 105).

Apart from the organic or sponsorship frame of election violence, respondents also viewed election violence through the "Bad Apples" discourse, whereby election violence is attributable to a few "misguided", "lazy", "unemployed" youths who are manipulated by the political elite. This "Few Bad Apples" discourse is pivoted on essentialist claims like "Zimbabwe is a Christian country", "Zimbabweans are peace-loving people", or that "there is no culture of violence in Zimbabwe". Such claims give way to a religious mantra whereby election violence is associated with evil spirits. For instance, one participant described Zimbabweans as people who are "blessed" because they like "good life". She said:

> *So I think that Zimbabweans generally don't have a culture of violence. They have a culture of taking advantage of opportunities. They always want to grab opportunities for work, where an opportunity to work arises they grab them quickly. They want to enhance their material conditions. Although, sometimes, because violence is* ***a spirit it can possess anyone who would have been agitated*** *(C15).*

Constructing Zimbabweans in this way raises two salient issues in relation to election violence. Firstly, the statement suggests the existence of a link between election violence and the economic crisis occasioned by land reform and economic sanctions and the effects of Operation Murambatsvina (see Chapter Four).

The deepening economic crisis characterised by high unemployment and the shrinking of economic opportunities created a fertile ground for patron-client relationships whereby the youth and other vulnerable groups become cannon fodder on the chess-board of political God-fathers. This shows that election violence is deeply intertwined with the economy. Secondly, constructing electoral violence as a spirit evokes theological discourses on election violence whereby it is regarded as a moral rather than a political problem (Matikiti, 2012). According to Matikiti (2012, 34) "Violence is at odds with the spirit of the gospels. Jesus was consistently non-violent throughout his ministry. He advised his followers to learn to love their enemies". Constructions of election violence suggest that citizens view election violence as senseless or irrational (Juris, 2005) and they defer to the metaphysical world.

Viewing election violence this way fed into the instrumental discourses of election violence in the sense that any person could get possessed by a spirit if it chooses to. By the same reasoning anyone can get "possessed" by the "demon" of violence if the demon chose to because a "spirit" comes and goes as it wishes. Zimbabwe is constructed as a "Christian nation" with "peace-loving" and election violence only erupts during election time; the moments of madness. Constructing election violence as a spirit reinforces discourses about election violence being a preserve of a 'few misguided elements'. Thus, when they talked about election violence respondents evoked discourses about Zimbabwean exceptionalism whereby the country is constructed as different from the rest of the African countries. The statements below illustrate this:

> *I do not necessarily think that there is a culture of violence in this country, because of* ***the high level of education in the country****, because most people who engage in violence, they are people who do not have anything to do in life. But if someone is employed and goes to work they cannot afford to spend the night at a political gathering or toyi-toying in the streets, this is not possible.* ***The people who engage in political violence are people who do not have anything to do in life.*** *These are people who do not have anything to do to such an extent that someone will just come and buy them beer and say to them "right, guys, I would like you to go and do 1, 2, 3 things". Such people are in the minority.* ***But the rest of the population, because the other issue is that there are many Christians in our country.*** *They value life.* ***But the issue is that there are some bad apples who engage in violence.*** *But the issue is that when it happens, people get frightened and you know the number of people affected by this is huge and you know, because of the fear factor and also because the minority can also see that, the majority can also see that this is how our society has a culture of violence, no its just a small percentage of people. (C7).*

> *What I have observed is that the violence, especially the perpetrators of the violence, they are coming from one age-group. That's my observation. They are coming from the youth, especially, the youth. If ever there is a case of violence, the perpetrators mainly are the youth. And if you go down, down, down, if there is a case of violence again, if there is a case of violence, one or two of those cases and in 2008 the perpetrators of the violence they were the youth. And if* ***you go down, down, down, those youth, they are being given something to perpetrate violence.*** *So I think it's not a culture, it's an artificial thing,* ***or it's a manipulated thing for the violence.*** *If there was a culture we all know that my grandmother could practise it, my father could practise it, my sister could practise it and myself, could practice it. But I can't say there is a culture of violence, there is no… because one or two cases, especially this time now, of those one or two cases you can see*

*that the perpetrator of the violence they are coming from the youths**, and it is being paid violence also.** (C20).*

*It seems the country **is a Christian country,** they are **peace-loving people**, **comparing to other countries where there are Muslims, Christianity, wars and civil** wars and something like that. It seems **Zimbabwe is a peace-loving country but there is a group of people who are only being used by these political leaders in orchestrating violence** (C1).*

Although constitutionally Zimbabwe is a secular state there has been a tendency by various actors, primarily the media to construct the country as a Christian country. Such discourses have been fed by the fact that the country has generally enjoyed relative peace and stability, particularly after the signing on 22 December 1987 of the peace accord between the two the country's arch political rivals, Zanu (PF) and PF Zapu. It is against the backdrop of this artifice of stability and tranquility that the country that the 'Christian country' discourse thrived. Zimbabwean exceptionalism was thus undergirded by a discourse of abnormality, whereby election violence was projected as an aberration rather than a norm. The abnormality discourse was in turn sustained by essentialist tropes and claims that "most people" who perpetrate election violence "are unemployed" or "the youth"; constructions which mirror the elitist hegemony of respondents in this study. Election violence is thus constructed in relativist terms, a form of rationalization whereby election violence is constructed as comparatively lower than that of other African countries.

The following statements are illustrative in this regard:

***Violence is relative.** You can't compare us with Egyptians; you know we are not there. Ehe. General violence, there is the South African one, it's not as bad as in…**but it's bad, that of South Africa.** It's bad. You have people moving around with spears and all that, **it's not that bad in Zimbabwe**. It's not; it's not as if **there is a lot of violence that happens in Zimbabwe.** But 2008 there was quite a lot of you know, of violence. Eeh, but it has since died down, though personally I never saw any people fighting but I remember… (C16).*

Someone was saying to me because, even if you look back, back to Lobengula it was violence, after independence, Gukurahundi, it was violence and this person convinced me that Zimbabwe only knows the culture of violence because of all these struggles, and that's why we continue to

always fight. But also, if I ***look at other countries the levels*** *of our violence, I think maybe because of my work, I travel a lot. I have been to Sudan for six months. I have been to Kenya to observe elections.* ***I look at the extent of violence there, this is nothing. Our violence is nothing.*** *Yeah.* ***It's not comparable.*** *So then I don't want to normalize violence, but then I would think conflict is* ***inevitable*** *in any community* ***but ours, if you compare to other countries,*** *we have not taken guns, we have not gone,* ***you see, we don't have civil unrest, you know those kinds of things,*** *so I think I would say our level of violence are…I am not normalizing violence. No.* ***(C10).***

In comparing election violence in Zimbabwe with that of other African countries respondents sought to depict election violence in Zimbabwe as less serious. Through this comparison respondents sought to rationalise election violence by constructing it as relative as well as inevitable. Further, election violence was constructed as part of a larger continuum of social, political and historical nation-building processes dating back from time immemorial. Election violence was, therefore, synonymous with the birthing of the Zimbabwean nation. Hence election violence was conflated with general violence, particularly when citizens talked about a "culture of violence" in Zimbabwe. This shows that there is an organic link between broader violence in society and electoral violence.

Reif (2012, 7) alludes to the connection between election violence and other forms of violence in society when she notes that the severity or level of election violence correlates with the existence or non-existence of a "high base line of other forms of violence". De Los Ros (2004, 30) notes that social, economic, and political violence are intricately intertwined and "interact simultaneously". Straus (2012, 195) contends that "violent conflicts over access to vital resources are critical forms of political violence that deserve greater empirical and theoretical attention".

Straus further notes how in the electoral cases of Kenya, Zimbabwe and Cote d' Ivo ire, the issue of access to land was central to the election violence that occurred in these countries. This shows that election violence is a complex phenomenon and is intricately interwoven with other forms of violence in society. A profound understanding of election violence must of necessity examine how it interacts with other forms of general violence in society.

7.3.1 Causes of Election Violence

Respondents viewed election violence through an instrumentalist lens whereby election violence was constructed as a tool for gaining or retaining political power. The majority of respondents projected politicians as people who are intrinsically motivated by the desire for power and are prepared to conscript violence as part of the "menu of manipulation" (Schedler 2002, 36). This election violence-power nexus is discursively illustrated in the following statements:

> *It's a **desire for power**. The desire for **power under every circumstance. By any means necessary**. You **want to remain in power; you want to get into power, without anything**. Then that is, that causes violence. If a person would want to lead, to lead, having been requested by the people, **then you are confident**, but, these people are going to vote for you, why beating them? Why forcing them? (C5).*

> *I think the causes have to do with power. And **power is not in ordinary people.** Its power of people who are above, the leaders. That's where there is **too much hunger for power**. So if people are power hungry they will go out of their **way to gain power by hook and crook.** They are willing to **bend the law** in order to get what they want. I think that is the major problem. The issue of power. People want power and they are determined to get it at all costs (C21).*

> *I think it's normally driven by **greedy** by a few individuals because normally we are when we are, working towards elections that's when people, these things normally start coming up. And elections mean that **one has to get into power** and so on and so forth. All the **resources that are associated with getting into power.** So I think **electoral violence is driven, you know by those who want to get into power**. It will never, it will never be an initiative from the electorate itself. (C17).*

These citizen discourses demonstrate that the desire for power is the main motive behind election violence. Respondents mentioned both "power retention" and "power gaining", implying that both aspirants for political office and incumbents were culpable of election violence. The use of phrases such like "power under every circumstance", "remaining in power", "hunger for power", "willing to bend the rules", and "greedy" connotes criminality in the manner in which election violence is perpetrated and the deficiency in legitimacy by those who vie for power.

Muller (2011) (see Chapter Two) argues that a politician's unwillingness to lose elections may motivate them to kill their opponents (Muller 2011, 99) or to employ campaign strategies that will bias the election process or result in one way or the other (Reif 2012). Mueller further argues that that "politicians have powerful incentives to subvert laws and institutions that keep them from gaining or retaining power" and will do whatever it takes not to lose power (2011, 100).

In fragile states such as Zimbabwe the acquisition of power is linked to access to resources and prospects of enhanced livelihoods. In their narratives respondents talked about patronage politics as an irresistible incentive for electoral violence. The following statements are poignant examples in this regard:

> *Sometimes it is, it is because of poverty, some people, if they are given money, unemployment. They have no money. They have nothing to do. They are given money for beer. You see? They enjoy. You see? Just the small money that they get will give them the access to good life. They are given transport so that they enjoy a free ride, the whole day enjoying themselves. Its lack of commitment to job because a person who has his job will not do that, will not find time to beat up another person because he will be having something to do. But if you check, because of lack of employment if you go to that Ximex Mall, the number of unemployed youths there. They just loiter around the whole day. If you go there with your car and give them $10 each, let's go, they will go with you. That's a job. To them that's a job* (C5).

> *Mainly people fear losing, because in Zimbabwe now those (political office) have become jobs, you know. A person will say to his wife, I mean, I am going to work. He is going to Parliament and you say you are going to work. It's not a job. That's the problem now. It has to be demystified, that being in public office you can get out any time. So once people, like in America they change, they give each other an opportunity to prove their stupidity. Like if Tsvangirai had won maybe the elections in 2005, in 2010 people would have noticed that this one ah, we were wrong, they choose another one. But now people would be thinking that it's a job now,* (C13).

> *I think maybe basically people know that whoever is coming into government is going to have an effect or impact on their lives so what they believe is that the person whom they don't think carries their values comes into power then it will be disastrous for them. So that very same person thought he will make them want to force other people to support their cause or candidate so that they have their own way. I think that is the reason why there is violence.* (C3).

These statements show that respondents view election violence in Zimbabwe as intricately interwoven with the country's social and economic problems. They view election violence as a product of unequal socio-economic structures which reproduce unequal relations between the poor and the powerful political elite. These inequalities breed networks of patronage in which the poor become pawns on the chessboards of the political elite. For the reason that political office becomes a source of livelihood the poor are more than prepared to die for politicians as their fates become intertwined. Sisk (discussed in Chapter Two) argues that:

> When winning a state office is the key to livelihood not just for an individual, but for the entire clan, faction, or even ethnic group, the stakes involved in prevailing in electoral competition are incidentally high. Studies of election-related violence often highlight the perpetuation of patronage politics , or a system in which politicians are gang-like "bosses" that control resources (such as access to jobs and income) and dispense public services such as housing, healthcare or lucrative government contracts (Sisk 2008, 9).

This demonstrates that election violence is deeply implicated in a society's social structures. One respondent attributed election violence to the destruction of these networks of political patronage through sanctions imposed on ruling party politicians. According to this respondent, sanctions did not just undercut networks of patronage, but also polarised society along political lines. He said that:

> Because what happens now with those people, even if you look at organisations which are under sanctions and all those asset freezes. If you just look at a travel ban, like for one major politician now. You will now have maybe his wife, the wife will have relatives. And then he himself has relatives, young brothers who have their children and they are all looking up to this person. It will be like a pyramid with that person at the top and it will be going down. So when that person is no longer able to go to London to do his business and do whatever they now feel like somebody caused this because they would know from a long time, you know when Babamukuru (uncle) comes from London we will get this and that and we get some clothes, we get these things. Those things will stop coming. Maybe when he will go to London, he will get those free buses, these ones which have no place to dump. He comes with about 10 buses and he gives a lot. When he goes to the people and say ah, no guys I can no longer go to London, you know those buses you we cannot get them because of the sanctions. It's because of these guys. Those people now have

> got this mentality to say we have to kill them (those advocating for sanctions). They are making us suffer. We should make them suffer as well. (C13).

These statements reveal that citizens do not view election violence as an event, but rather deeply implicated in larger power contestations. This brings to the fore the efficacy of externally driven political intervention strategies such as economic sanctions and other embargoes, particularly in socially and politically fractured societies. Although economic sanctions may be a useful remedy for effecting equal balance of power in unequal power conflicts (Wolfsfeld 1992, 1) such interventions may backfire if they are externally driven. Sanctions may help undercut the power of the superior party in the conflict by weakening structures of patronage but they may also polarize and breed a culture of impunity, vindictiveness, and violent reprisals against the weaker party. This is significant as it is revealing in understanding some of the causes election violence.

A profound understanding of the causes of election violence in Zimbabwe can be gained by paying attention to participants' narratives on the connection between election violence in contemporary Zimbabwe and historical violence such as the liberation struggle. Some respondents interpreted election violence as part of a seamless culture of violence rooted in the country's colonial and anti-colonial legacy. In this sense election violence was conceived as part and parcel of the broader culture of political violence seeded through colonialism and the liberation struggle. The following statements are instructive in this regard:

> *I think that at times it's something (violence) that the whole nation just acquired, probably coming from the liberation struggle and so forth because if you look at The Herald, you know. If you buy it, its use of you know, its use of, what isit called, this Chibombo exhumations, gruesome you know, those things that took place and then it's displayed in a national paper for everyone to see. So* ***that culture*** *already is being celebrated that this is who we are, we are from this. This is what is going to identify us. So right now I know people who I know, who got involved in violence just because they think that it has some historical, you know, it has got a historical background. Being violent in itself becomes something which is indispensable because people believe that this is how we construct our, what, our nation and our policies were born out of violence. So violence is now being celebrated, which is not supposed to happen. And you also see that it doesn't go back to the liberation struggle. The pro-democracy movement is also beginning to buy into the same, the same story, to say there were people who were victimised you know, from 2000*

and so forth and so forth. They also trace events like Gukurahundi and so forth. So the whole ***culture*** *has become an issue of violence. Its mooted everywhere, wherever you go, it's always…yeah.* *(C17).*

Basically, the way this country like came up was violently. So we would blame the liberation struggle, the people who advocated for that because in South Africa such issues don't occur because there was no violence to start with for them to get in there. There were just a few people shot in demonstrations. People who were put in prison, but you know, but violence that comes out in war puts a certain mindset in people, that you know we can do anything. And even after the war there was that issue of the small civil war that, so people generally were now violent because they go into that war, so the real reason that this violence is occurring is because of the liberation struggle. So the person to blame obviously will be people who organized that liberation struggle. But even if now, but now if you try to go against those people now, they will be saying you know, this education that you are enjoying, you know that University there, you know you wouldn't just have black people and you now feel like violence is justified. That's like maybe the problem that's occurring. Because these people they started the whole thing, right and they justified and said no, we have to fight for our country. And the people they felt like it's correct. And they said "Aah we fought for it". *(C13).*

Respondents constructed a historicisation discourse whereby election violence was constructed as part of the broader process of nation-building and national identity formation starting with the liberation struggle. This historicisation is pivoted on rationalisation and blame discourses in the sense that the liberation struggle is portrayed as a necessary evil and election violence is constructed as inevitable because it is embedded in the nation's history. Such discourses run counter to exceptionalist discourses, particularly the view that there is no culture of election violence in Zimbabwe. This shows that citizens constructed contradictory discourses in relation to causes of election violence.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011, 2) attributes election violence to the existence of a culture of violence. His contention is that the ruling party, Zanu (PF) has constructed and deployed ideologies of violence to silence its enemies and opponents and to eventually claim to be the divinely ordained heir to the nationalist revolutionary spirit running from the primary resistance of the 1890s to mass nationalism of the 1960s, the armed liberation struggle of the 1970s up to the present". Similarly, Darnolf (1997, 15) argues "that countries whose independence processes were violent can be expected to have lower tolerance for deviance".

Citizen narratives on election violence demonstrate that a nation's history plays a pivotal role in shaping a nation's political culture, values, attitudes and norms ((Darnolf 1997). Understanding election violence as part of a historical continuum is significant in that it demonstrates that election violence is intricately interwoven with history.

7.4 Questioning the Press: Citizen Assessments of Press Reporting of Election Violence

The respondents constructed various discourses around the way in which the press represented election violence in Zimbabwe. Four types of discourses are discussed in this regard, namely; polarisation discourse, exaggeration discourse, cover-ups and the influence of election reporting.

7.4.1 Polarisation

All the 21 respondents complained about press polarisation in reporting election violence. They projected polarisation of the press along political lines as undesirable, harmful and detrimental to ethical and informative reporting. Respondents were generally in agreement in their observation that the press was partial in its reportage. On the one hand the state press focused on violence perpetrated by the opposition while maintaining silence on election violence perpetrated by the ruling party. On the other hand, the privately-owned press paid attention to election violence perpetrated by the ruling party while ignoring election violence perpetrated by the opposition party. Thus interview respondents accentuated words and phrases that depict 'bias', 'partiality', 'imbalance', 'selectivity' and 'lack of neutrality' in reports on election violence.

The following statements illustrate of these sentiments:

The issue of election violence is handled by newspapers; let me call them media houses in different ways because each media house has got its own agenda. So for their seed which they sowed secretly to germinate in a manner that they like they must use newspapers for their seed, be it a seed of violence or peace it must germinate…So violence can be talked about in different ways depending on the political agenda of a particular newspaper and the political agenda of their sponsors or funders. The state-owned newspapers will not report that the government is killing people because people will say you are bad. The privately owned newspaper, which is the one that has brought opposition political parties, because that is the one that brings the opposition, must say opposition party supporters are being beaten. But where in the world have you seen a situation whereby only supporters of a single party are killed while they are folding their arms. That is not possible. Where there is a fight it is always two bulls that fight. (C9).

The coverage of election violence has largely depended on which newspaper is reporting on the issue. If it is the Daily news, it will report that Zanu (PF) has wronged in such and such a way, it caused this and that and sometimes criticising even the good things that Zanu (PF) might have done, but the Daily News will find faults. Then The Herald will report in such a way that there is nothing positive that comes out of the MDC, nothing good will come out of the party. The paper will write in such a way that whatever the MDC does is wrong. You will find that as citizens, we may have respect for our leaders, Prime Minister, President and so on, but the impression that the MDC is a party which is there to cause violence this and that, in a propagandist way. Then comes the MDC it will also be propagating its own propaganda. Because of this it becomes difficult for you to get the real truth; you will be left ignorant and biased to such an extent that if you read The Herald only you will be left thinking that Mr. Tsvangirai is not good. If you read the Daily News, you will also be left thinking that President Mugabe is not good. (C6).

What I have noticed is that The Herald usually covers violence within the MDC most of the time. I am not sure if this is intra-party violence that is violence within the MDC party itself, unlike what the likes of Daily News and Newsday will be reporting that people were beaten in Chitungwiza and in Mutare as well. This you find in independent newspapers, but the likes of The Herald they try as much as possible to just ignore such things. Unless if it is violence within the party. (C21).

I notice that the News Day focuses on violence perpetrated by Zanu (PF) while The Herald focuses on the violence perpetrated by the MDC, which means the two newspapers contradict each other, it's like they blame the other party which they are not supporting for perpetrating violence, while the other paper is also on the other side. So at the end of the day you have to check the facts yourself as a person… I have got a lot of things that I feel I don't like. It's mostly to do with bias whereby a certain newspaper might be hitting on one party to the extent that it even ignores things that are happening next to them, because, like this thing,

like violence in Zanu (PF). The Herald would ignore such reports whereby they hear Zanu (PF) people have attacked so and so, but they would rather ignore the thing because they are in support of the party, while the News Day would also ignore things that MDC would do like violence, they would keep a blind eye on such issues and yet it's happening more often within the party. Sometimes they sensationalize also, where they say people have been raped, people have been what, what, and all those things but we have never seen some of those things happening. (C1).

Eh, I will categorise these newspapers. There is state media, you can see even if you take today's newspaper, you can see that this paper is covering the, the, they are de- campaigning, if, if violence happens they will say it's not happening. No matter, there are some people who have been killed or who have been injured because of that. As long as the people who perpetrate that violence belong to the state they don't cover it as violence. And when we go to the private press, eh, yeah, they do report but sometimes their view on election violence we, we can, its balanced but sometimes they exaggerate a bit, so that maybe because they want to sensitize, the, the, the issue so that people can respond the way they want.(C8)

These statements illustrate the press constructed competing versions of reality about the same event, meaning that the informative mandate of the press is compromised. Respondents view press reporting of election violence as driven by the political agendas rather than the need to inform the public.

Respondents use words and phrases that underscore antagonism between the state press and the privately-owned press in relation to reporting of election violence. Such words include "differently", "it depends", "the other side", "one party" and "contradict". These words and phrases construct the press as irreconcilable polar opposites. Further, phrases, such as "own agendas", "political agendas", and "propaganda" evoke conspiratorial motives behind the polarisation and partisanship. Some respondents highlighted negative manifestations of polarisation such as selectivity whereby news about some incidents of political violence were given salience while others were suppressed depending on the political party involved.

One respondent talked about how the press may suppress news about deaths caused by election violence.

> *I think these newspapers are skewed in either direction. I had the privilege of having gone to the rural areas, like what I said, I went to Rusape over the weekend; I went on Saturday and came back on Sunday. I actually witnessed violence which happened there first hand. I just thought maybe this incident was not going to come out in the papers but then quite interestingly around, I think I came back around lunch hour and I saw an article in Newsday, but in terms of content now what actually transpired and what was in the article, there are so many details that are not what, that are not there. Myself. I am not a journalist but you know I was even able to tell the story for more than ten minutes, what actually transpired and names and everything. But then the courage, it had almost, it had less than 100 words in the newspaper. There were so many things that were not mentioned. So I really feel that the papers are not doing enough. They are leaving out some crucial information which would make a person who did not witness the event first hand understand what really transpired. You can even conform this in the online user generated comments that are there. These are some of the questions that people ask, that when was this, but we didn't know who killed the person or who killed who, that information is really not there. People really want the actual, the factual information, it's not really there. What is mostly there is the analysis and then they are into propaganda and things like that, into sensationalism.* (C17)

Partisanship in reporting election violence militated against citizens getting factual information about what had transpired. Election violence reporting was prone to selectivity resulting in citizens being ignorant about what exactly was happening in the country. In order to bridge the information gaps some respondents said they resorted to reading different newspapers or the online media in order to obtain complete or alternative accounts of events.

One respondent said:

> *If you read all the newspapers like myself, I read all the newspapers because of the access to the Internet that I have, I can read all the newspapers. If you have access to the Internet you can read all the newspapers. If you read all the newspapers you can be satisfied with the coverage of election violence and you can feel that the coverage is better. But let us say a person does not have access to all the newspapers or you only read one newspaper like The Herald. Sometimes there might be a problem that you cannot say the coverage is adequate.* (C7).

The polarised reporting of election violence motivated citizens to look for alternative sources of information in order to balance their perspectives. Citizens construct themselves as active agents who deliberately expose themselves to diverse political views. The fact citizens cannot rely on a single newspaper for news and information about election violence is an indictment on the press and testament of the fact that election violence reporting is unlike any other political beat. There are policy implications here. The lesson learnt is that monopolistic ownership structures are inimical to diversity of political views and democratisation. As demonstrated by the views of the respondents the solution lies in harnessing online media platforms. One respondent, for instance, talked about how selectivity and suppression of information complicated things for readers but commented that new communication technologies such as Facebook and online newspapers created opportunities for him to triangulate news sources in order to establish the veracity of certain news reports about election violence. He complained as follows:

> *Ya, this kinds of complicates things for the reader in terms of…though with the coming of new technology such as Facebook and so forth, you check through the Internet, whether people in those areas are agreed with the facts. For example, The Herald Online or the News Day Online people comment on the news article confirming whether it is true or not. Then you can see whether there has been violence in those areas or not.* (C1).

This suggests that the new media will be the game changer in the new political communication dispensation. Moyo (2009) notes how online news websites became "parallel markets" for news and information about the 2008 Zimbabwean harmonised election by providing perspectives that were alternative views to those of the state media.

Similarly, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter may be efficacious for cross-checking news on election violence. However, this is a subject for separate investigation. It is trite to say that political polarisation of the press is detrimental to the entrenchment of democratization in that the press becomes agents of misinformation rather than education and information. The democratic mandate of the press to inform and educate the citizenry is predicated on the assumptions that the press provides accurate and complete accounts of events rather than sanitized or distorted versions of reality.

A report on the official inquiry into the state of the information and media Industry in Zimbabwe (IMPI) (Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Service, 2014, 146) concluded that media polarisation in Zimbabwe had fuelled deep divisions among citizens. Due to the polarization of the press in the country many people were "avoiding reading certain newspapers as well as listening to or watching some radio and television stations to avoid biased reporting by these outlets" (IMPI Report, 2014, 162). This shows that polarisation can exacerbate social and political tensions by sowing seeds of mistrust and even demobilising the citizenry politically through its anti-democratic tendencies.

7.4.2 Exaggerations

The majority of the respondents talked about the negative effects of exaggerations in election violence reporting. Significantly, exaggerations were mentioned in the same breath or interchangeably referred to as "sensationalism". Senastionalism has been defined as communication that is aimed at arousing immediate and strong emotional reactions among the public and "focuses on the senses as a key site of stimulation, and emphasizes bodily and non-rational actions" (Wiltenburg cited by Green 2012, 98). Sensational news is very loud and appeals to the vulgar tastes of the audience, and is aimed at generating empathy among the audiences (Uribe and Gunter, cited by Green, 78). From a journalistic perspective sensationalism has a pejorative connotation in the sense that the hyping of news is generally regarded as unethical. The respondents talked about sensationalism in different ways. Some respondents projected it through a pejorative lens while others depicted it euphemistically.

Pejorative discursive constructions of sensationalism equated it to exaggerations. Thus, respondents complained about the "spicing up of stories", "exaggerations", events being "blown out of proportion", "hyping", "heightening" and "a lot of nose" in the reporting of election violence by the press. The following excerpts from the interviews are illustrative:

> *As far as the state media is concerned they make **a lot of noise if** something has been done by the opposition. They will make sure that they have **blown it out of proportion.** They will give it front page coverage. Right? But eeh, whereas nhingiriki (I mean) on the other hand, newspapers like The Standard, Newsday and Daily News, anything done by Zanu (PF), they always give it wide coverage, in terms of those, the violence.*(C11).

> *I would say that newspapers, especially those that are controlled by the opposition politics do not at all give people information, but only **sensationalize.** They can have a headline, but if you read the actual story you will find that what is in the headline and what is in the actual story is totally different. The reason why they do this is that they want to sell the newspaper. And indeed the newspaper will sell.* (C9).

> *The problem is that the media **may continue spicing up stories**. That's how I see it. These things will be happening, but the media may continue repeating these stories even where the events are non-existent.* (C7).

The respondents projected sensationalism as detrimental to quality journalism in that sensational news reports misled the public. Interestingly some respondents talked about sensationalism in a euphemistic or positive way in which case they foregrounded its necessity to enhance the watchdog function of the press. They argued that exaggeration or sensationalism enabled the press to sound the sirens on perpetrators of election violence and to draw the attention of the international community on what was happening in the country. One respondent conceded that the private press exaggerated when they reported on election violence issues but justified it on the grounds that it deterred perpetrators of election violence.

He said:

> *The private press, from my own view I think they just want to sensitize the situation so that no form of any violence can, should happen to any person. So they will try to exaggerate so that people would react, even the outside world would react so that the people are protected. Maybe that's their motive, from the way I see it…But when the private media of course they try to cover, but on certain issues, maybe, they do it to prevent something not to happen. They exaggerate so that they, they, these ones can stop because the papers have reported.* (C8).

It is instructive to note how the word sensationalism acquires an instrumental connotation of "sensitizing", meaning to make people aware. This positive instrumentalisation evokes the watchdog or the "burglar alarm" journalism function whereby the press acts a public sentinel (Norris, 2010), or the public's eyes and ears as opposed to a "passive recorder of events" (Coronel 2010, 112). Coronel notes that "…the myth of the intrepid journalist doggedly pursuing the trial of wrongdoing remains very much alive both in the media as well as popular lore". The "burglar alarm" (McQuail 2013, 112) function of the press lends itself well to the reporting of election violence because it acts as a deterrent to would be perpetrators of election violence. The juxtaposition of optimistic and pessimistic discourses about sensationalism demonstrates that there is no consensus regarding the desirability of the watchdog function of the press. Coronel (2010, 114) notes how, some critics hold that the adversarial nature of the press may erode public trust of the government and democracy itself. This shows that the watchdog role is both desirable and undesirable, depending on the specific context; an ambivalence that was quite evident in the narratives of some of the respondents.

For instance, some respondents indicated that, although reports on election violence were sensational they had some grain of truth.

The following excerpts illustrate this:

> *There has been **some form of exaggeration** in the manner in which newspapers report on election violence. Here and there people get angry over one or two issues*. (C2).

> *...while we say there is some tendency of **exaggerating, but the grain** of truth can also be found there. So much so that there is that balance between truthfulness and some exaggeration, eh, a clever person would take a caution for a story covered as that.* (C8).

> *You will see it probably if you look at The Herald when it is covering issues to do with the opposition. **There is an element** of vilifying. They try to vilify whoever is mentioned in the article. You read probably in The Herald and Newsday, the same article, there **is an element of sensationalizing** the event. Those are major differences whereby you cannot really tell what the truth is about the event, what really transpired. But you can see now when you read, you can **deduce from the subtext,** that this one is saying this, this one is saying that, so probably this is what is happened. So you can see that there is no paper with the last word that one can really visit in order to get a true picture of what transpired. The Herald vilifies and then when you look at the other ones they **sensationalise** so that people become emotional and angry. Those are the major differences that you see*. (C17).

Phrases such as "some form of exaggeration", "a tendency", "deduce", and "an element" suggest that sensationalized election reports become some kind of a "foggy zone" whereby what is reported in the press is neither true nor false. The implications are that the quality of information that citizens get from the press cannot be relied on for making crucial decisions.Some participants did not just register their misgivings about sensationalization of election violence, but also identified the motives behind it. Respondents mainly attributed sensationalism to commercial imperatives, funding models, political agendas and unethical behaviour by journalists.

The following excerpts illustrate the potency of commercial imperatives:

I think it has to do with probably, ***funding*** *and expectations of a newspaper, you know obviously it's* ***commercial.*** *They also want to sell, probably more copies per day. So, on the other hand I think that it does not do them any good to just present a story as it is but then if they* ***sensationalize*** *they* ***will sell more copies.*** *For example, when the likes of Daily News came they were quite* ***controversial*** *and they started taking a larger* ***market share*** *of The Herald, but then it was because of those stories that they thought maybe were* ***controversial.*** *Things that people never thought were happening. So I think that probably that is one of the reasons why we justify that is why they produce articles like that, to also survive in the market.* (C17).

That's what I was talking about, the issue of ***sensational reporting****, because most of the other newspapers are* ***tabloids*** *and what they write about is probably that one story on political violence will be the story for the whole newspaper and that's where they get* ***their money.*** *And now if you look at newspapers like The Herald they will* ***not sensationalise*** *because their core business as far as their core business is concerned is the classified columns, although they will report on other stories but most of their money comes from the classifieds. But these other ones, because that is their* ***cash cow*** *they make sure, because the more people rush for a newspaper, for a newspaper it means the* ***sales*** *are increasing.(C4).*

So they are now more ***looking for money*** *using the* ***situation and emotions*** *surrounding violence. Because it's very* ***emotional*** *because if somebody dies the person has relatives, friends and all those people, they are now* ***becoming emotional.*** *So when they see a paper they are now saying so and so is in trouble and they might just go to prison. Yet maybe it was just a small warning.* ***People buy*** *that* ***paper, when they read they see there is nothing****. That person is not even in so much trouble.* (C13).

Interestingly, the polarisation between the state-owned and the privately-owned press is also mirrored in the narratives of the respondents when they rationalise sensationalism differently. The common thread connecting these discourses, however is that, it is the emotive nature of election reporting that lends itself to the newsworthiness logic.

This is consistent with the maxim "if it bleeds it leads" (Meadow 2009, 239) referred to in Chapter Two. Green (2012, 98) argues that sensationalist accounts of crime "build their potency on both the visceral response to violence itself and the quasi-religious dilemma posed by transgression on core values". Like crime, election violence elicits empathy from the audience easily if it is sensationalised because sensationalism avoids explicit polemics and relies on "unanalyzed emotional responses" (Wiltenburg, cited in Green, 2012, 98).

The deliberate inflections of some incidents of election violence while suppressing others may whip up the emotions of the readers. Green (2012, 2) rightly points out that the commercial imperative results in the construction of particular reality and version of violence and explanations for it.

The outcome is a tension filled triadic relationship between the press's moral, economic and political agenda, whereby reporting on election violence treads a very thin line between the watchdog function of the press and the activist journalism of truthful reporting and advocacy journalism.

7.4.3 Cover-ups

It is instructive to note that sensationalism and cover-ups were mentioned in the same breath. Respondents mentioned that, while some incidents would be blown out of proportion by the press, others were suppressed, thereby demonstrating that the motive behind sensationalising election violence was more than commercially driven as it was also driven by political agendas.

As election violence became a site for political struggles certain incidents of election violence would be deliberately singled out for hyping while others were swept under the carpet. The following statements illustrate this:

> *But you, you may not be surprised to find that with certain media houses there is a **deliberate** attempt at **covering up** the things of this one, especially during election time where the **heightened portrayal of** what is good about this person and **ignoring**, you know, **deliberately**, **calculatively** the negatives of this other person. All because they want to prop up the faults for that person.* (C18).

> *Whereas The Herald was just you know saying MDC is very violent, they burnt ZUPCO buses, they went and did this and that, they are attacking. They were just you know, **covering those small things** that will be done by the MDC and the other paper will be trying to **cover up,** cover these things that Zanu (PF) will be doing in response or which they actually do for the first time because the MDC is the only strong party which gave an opposition which was a bit strong.* (C13).

> *At the end of the day newspapers are not informing the public as far as electoral violence is concerned, because, especially due to **cover ups.** The state media, because of funding is more capitalised, in terms of human capital, so they are almost everywhere, in terms of the whole parts of the country are concerned. And as such, eeh, anything that happens as long as it is negative to Zanu (PF) is not even, eeh, eeh, eeh, eeh, **exposed** to the people. So they always **play it down**.* (C11).

Election violence was projected as being prone to journalistic selectivity because of political motives. Words such as "cover-ups", "play it down", and "deliberate" and "calculatively" connote a high level of selectivity and agenda-setting. Respondents mobilised discourses of "conspiracy of silence" and salience when talking about election violence. However, this selectivity is more than a result of professional misdemeanours as it also a determinant of political economics. This clearly demonstrates how in fragile societies the press is instrumentalised for both economic and political objectives. The implications are that the credibility and reliability of the press is compromised as citizens cannot make meaningful choices.

Voltmer (2010, 140) rightly states that:

> Without reliable information it would not be difficult for citizens to use their power effectively at election time, nor would they be aware of the problems and issues that need active consideration beyond voting. The daily flow of news generates a running tally of government policies, political events, and the actions of the political officials, on the basis of which citizens make their choices. An unreliable press thus undermines the rooting of a vibrant specific culture among the citizenry by making citizens more ignorant of their social and political obligations.

An unreliable press is not only the midwife of ignorance, but also a source of social tensions and anti-democratic practices.

7.4.4 Political Influence of the Press

Narratives on citizen engagement with press reporting of election violence yielded a rich tapestry of insights in relation to how they are influenced by press discourses on election violence. Although this influence was largely projected through a negative lens a few of the respondents projected the influence of the press through a positivity lens.

On the one hand, the negativity ranged from the harmful effects of cover-ups, bias, inaccuracies, falsehoods, silence, and exaggerations. On the other hand, positive influences included claims that certain styles and practices of reporting election violence nudged citizens to take a stand against election violence and to participate in political processes.

Beyond this dichotomy, there were contingent discourses where the influence of the press discourses on citizens hinged on certain conditions. The majority of respondents said that sensational reporting, bias and inaccuracies in reporting election violence engendered hatred among citizens.

The following excerpts from the interviews demonstrate this:

After sensationalizing news for example, it's more like they create a sense of ***hatred towards*** *each other in the society. Members of the society tend to* ***blame*** *each other saying you have caused violence and* ***start fighting*** *that moment. So we can say the media at times* ***orchestrate violence*** *rather than quelling it***.** (C1).

You know it will go a long way in making other people ***hate that person****, eh, eh, if it is* ***craftily*** *cultivated. Eh, eh, it tends to be heightened especially where you make a physical contact with that person because that person has been portrayed in such* ***a bad light*** *that you also see your problems closely* ***associated*** *with the actions of that person. So you find* ***no good reason to forgive****, you know, you may even* ***cause physical harm,*** *you know because everybody in their individuality they want to survive normally but then if you are faced with information that your problems are because of this person, you are failing to provide for your family because of this person, ah,* ***you cannot have anything kind about that person****.* (C18).

The manner in which some stories are being reported by some newspapers can ***cause violence*** *because if a newspaper reports that, that our political party that we subscribe to is, fighting another political* ***party we will begin to think that it is right for us to fight with people of that particular party.*** *The idea* ***of violence itself is enough to instigate violence but*** *the problem is that some people may give a different interpretation to the story and end up engaging in some violent activities just because they* ***have read about violent acts****. Because there is a certain book on Love, after reading the book I went home and that day there was a lot of love in the house just because I had read a book on love but I had not realised that it was because of the book which I had read.(C6).*

I for one, the influence that I get is one that makes me to ***be able to make choices****, it can be choices* ***about the leadership*** *that I want and then choices about maybe, my one councillor where I say depending on what is there. But I find that there is a lot of influence because there are certain things* ***that you cannot stop thinking about them****. They are so touching as if you are the one who is mentioned in the story. Sometimes you feel* ***your heart aching*** *(laughs) as if you will* ***suffer from high blood pressure*** *but at the end of the day it's what you have read which is affecting you. And it's also what other sectors or sections of the media are saying about maybe* ***your leader*** *that you like so much* ***being belittled whatever, whatever, it's as if you are the one who has been insulted.*** *And I have* ***noticed that I can't stop thinking about*** *it, most of the times when it is happening and I will be saying to myself don't people see that what is happening is not good. Forgetting that these people (vendor interrupts conversation). So at times it really affects you, and* ***it affects you emotionally****, as if you are* ***the one who has been insulted.*** *You will feel it. And at times when it* ***happens and it touches you and*** *you look at the next person and you see that they are not even worried about it. She might actually say "so what?" do you eat at his house?" eh things like that. (C21).*

The range of effects of election violence reporting on the citizens varied from fostering hatred, legitimising election violence, 'negative' 'role modeling' or identification, emotional effects, promoting political engagement to incitement of violence. This shows that the effect of press discourses on election violence was complex. This brings under the spotlight the social constructivist perspective of reality which underpins this thesis. For instance, the view that the press engendered hatred among people (as reflected in statements by C1 and C18 above) echoes the "Rwandan model" (Onyebadi and Oyedeji 2011, 215) the notion that the media were "lubricants" for heightening conflicts in society (Gardner cited in Onyebadi and Oyedeji 2011, 218). However, unlike the Rwandan and the Kenyan situation model the press did not directly advocate or incite violence.Underpinning this "bad influence" frame is the perception that through their polarising reporting the press can exacerbate conflict. Citizen narratives on election violence also construct the press as perpetuating the vicious cycle of election violence in the sense that the way the press frames election violence was perceived by some respondents as a tacit endorsement of election violence. However, in some instances the press's influence on the citizens is both negative and positive in that press framing of election violence can cause some citizens to grieve but that pain may motivate them to participate in political processes. This ambivalence is further demonstrated through citizen discourses whereby some respondents constructed the influence of the press as contingent on particular factors. One respondent, for example, said that the influence of the press depends on whether election violence was exposed or not. He said:

> *I will say, in fact, once these, eh, the violence has been exposed and then the results are actually told and then the consequences are seen by the public, then these are likely to influence…But if they are not exposed then, they cannot influence…* (C5).

If perpetrators of election violence are exposed in the press this may act as a deterrent to would-be offenders, but if perpetrators go unpunished this becomes an incentive for impunity as well as negative social learning. Thus reporting has both negative and positive effects on citizens.

A leitmotif of the negative effects of reporting election violence in the narratives of the respondents was the discourse of "fear". Respondents talked about how particular ways of framing election violence by the press engendered fear and a culture of silence among the citizens. The following excerpts from the interviews illustrate this:

> *Yes, and then, me as an individual again, how I am now **afraid** of just **talking anywhere** because of the violence which is being reported, the effect upon…You don't normally comment as far as the **po-litics** (hesitation) are concerned to **people you don't know.** You can **only talk** after establishing who you are talking to. Because at the end of the day, we all read about **people disappearing**. So **one is not sure**, you trust nobody and suspect everyone. So for those people that are **close to you**… So that's the, another effect of media coverage of violence. (C11).*

> *If I hear that there is violence somewhere, usually I feel that what people are doing is bad. I **begin to feel as if I am being personally attacked** because **my body and spirit are important to me.** So **I become frightened.** Stories about violence make **me feel frightened** because since I was young I have never liked violence. (C6).*

Fear is inimical to democratization in that it stifles expression and association and engenders mistrust. Fear breeds suspicion among citizens and may make election violence appear ubiquitous. Fear is constructed as undermining the development of positive civic values. In some instances, the polarising effects of press reporting of election violence induces pain which in turn may trigger schizophrenic reflexes since citizens may become unsure of how they should conduct themselves or relate to people who subscribe to different political views. One respondent illustrated this thus:

> *So when the truth is not told I feel pain. Sometimes I am influenced to talk even where I am not supposed to talk, sometimes to the extent of failing to disguise my political affiliation when I am not supposed to do that. It means I would have been **influenced** and **affected.** Secondly, I can be **affected** and **influenced** to such an extent that I do not talk; **I remain silent** when I am **supposed to talk.** Those who were supposed to hear my views will also **get affected** in the sense that those who were supposed to hear the truth lose out because I have **been affected, resulting in me remaining silent**, so I am **affected** both ways and usually when I **am affected other people also get affected because** where I am supposed **to tell the truth** and when I don't others are **affected because they won't know the truth.** If they are **influenced to react** they will be doing so using a wrong judgment so I can say that really **it disturbs me.*** (C9).

Election violence induces multiple and contradictory effects in individuals; pain, talking, silence or simply brings about new vocabularies of talking about politics. It is common for people not to make direct reference to names of political parties or personalities when discussing politics in Zimbabwe. This demonstrates that election violence has far reaching impact on the social fabric of the country and the way it is reported has significantly shapes everyday practices.

Apart from inducing fear, participants constructed the press reporting of election violence as having a demobilising effect. A significant number of respondents talked about how certain styles of reporting election violence engendered apathy, forced them to withdraw from politics, not only because they were afraid to express themselves, but because election violence makes them feel that there is no fair play. The following excerpts illustrate this:

> *For me their biggest shortfall, myself as a Christian and other Christians, Zimbabwe is a Christian country, these newspapers distort the world view of Christians and the way they think in the sense that some of them begin to* ***spread falsehoods*** *or are made to* ***propagate lies*** *by these newspapers saying "****we don't do politics, we don't like politics or worldly affairs.*** *If you ask them what worldly affairs are you talking about they don't understand because they would have* ***been filled with fear*** *because of the way in which the media's* ***sensational reporting.*** *They become* ***afraid of expressing their beliefs*** *because they don't want to be* ***associated*** *with one thing or the other. Even if they have* ***a political affiliation*** *they won't show like what the Bible says, they begin to behave* ***like sheep for slaughter****. They become* ***too scared*** *to such an extent that anyone can do what they like to them (C9).*
>
> *What the state media has done to me is to kill my* ***hope*** *(C8).*
>
> *People now have a tendency of creating their* ***own Islands*** *wherever they are, just seeing that there is violence out there, even at times when it's not even there. People now have a* ***preconceived idea*** *that there is always violence. They* ***don't want even to vote.*** *Even when the violence is not even there, they* ***may not vote.*** *(C13).*
>
> *Yes there might be violence but maybe for me how they report on the violence, rather the way they express what happened. Because, to some people, at the end, some people* ***will not even read newspapers*** *because there won't* ***be anything positive in the newspaper.*** *It's all* ***about violence.*** *In other words* ***everything is too negative****.* (C3).
>
> *The way in which newspapers cover election issues is that sometimes* ***I just lose interest in voting*** *immediately after reading the story. Even if I want to vote I just lose interest. (C6).*

*What I know is that all these newspapers at one time or the other they **will be lying**. Today, right now I don't even **have the zeal to go and buy a newspaper**. I just go maybe and read a headline. In other words, let me say this; these days what the newspapers are doing is that they **write a very attractive** headline so that we can go and buy the newspaper. If you buy the newspaper you find that maybe it's a **recycled story** and I ask. It has been the trend; maybe it's meant to attract us to buy the newspapers or what. And at the end of the day that maybe **they fabricated stories.** Some of these events are supposed to have happened within us where we live but the way they are reported by the newspapers makes you wonder whether those things will be happening under cover or what because sometimes you don't see these things happening were we live (C2).*

The above statements are revealing as much as they are instructive in that they demonstrate how citizen (mis)-perceptions about the press may engender citizen disengagement from political processes.

If citizens perceive the press to be distorting reality through sensational reporting, outright lies or thriving on negativity they may become mistrustful, demobilised, depoliticised, contemptuous, apathetic, cynical, or completely disengage from politics. Some scholars have pointed how suspicion and cynicism about the press's handling of public issues has been growing in the West, resulting in "the crisis of public communication" (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995, 1). Blumler and Gurevitch contend that the failure by the press to fulfill many of the obligations and duties contemplated in the fourth estate realm has engendered dissatisfaction among citizens resulting in them disengaging from their civic duties. Norris (2011, 1) concurs and further observes that there is a need to determine how many post-industrial societies have been experiencing "a tidal wave of public withdrawal from traditional channels of political activism". Similarly, Voltmer (2010, 149-150), notes how there has been growing political cynicism, alienation and citizen disillusionment about politics in some established and new democracies, leading to their disengagement from politics.

Voltmer notes that:

> It is argued that the way in which the media portray politics – the general anti-political bias and the distrust of political officials displayed by journalists breeds cynicism among citizens. Furthermore, as the current styles of covering the news emphasize strategic maneuverings of political actors over policy debates, the media are believed to create an image of politics that has more to do with fighting for its own sake than finding solutions to the problems that face the country.

The pessimistic view portrayed in the above-quoted statement is counterbalanced by minority views which indicate that press reporting of electoral violence also promoted citizen engagement in politics. In fact some respondents indicated that the manner in which the press reports election violence may make them emotional, and because of this emotion they are nudged to take particular political positions. For instance, one respondent said that if the press consistently reports falsely that members of one particular party are perpetrating election violence, members of the political party being falsely accused of perpetrating election violence could commit more violence. He said:

> *If a person is called a thief when that person is not and **yet society** believes that that's what you are, sometimes someone will just take a decision to become what **people think** they are because even if you don't do it your name still **gets tarnished.** Isn't it? Doing it or not doing it is just the same. That has got a lot **of influence** especially to those alleged to be perpetrating violence. That you have stories that **come out time and again alleging** that certain individuals are causing violence. Especially if some of **the stories are false.** (C7).*

The above statement shows that some people do not necessarily make people disengaged but the way the press reports election violence may make things worse. This is a form of negative engagement, whereby citizens who feel blackmailed by the press may perpetrate more violence. In some instances the engagement is positive, such as when the press reporting of election violence reinforces someone to vote for a particular party or to participate in political activities because they want political change.

The following excerpts are illustrative of this behaviour:

I remember that June 2008 was the most violent period and this information was coming from newspapers. That's when I would read that the body of a dead person has been found in such and such a place, in the mortuary at Parirenyatwa Hospital, that is when so and so's body who is said to have ***disappeared*** *has been found. He* ***disappeared*** *on such a day, and all those things. I remember that, I even kept a diary in 2008. What happened is that I had arrived here, I had gone to Europe. I had gone to Netherlands, then I came back on the same day that voting had ended or is it a day after the voting? But then with what I was hearing when I was abroad, people were telling me that it was a peaceful election and so forth. And then what happened, that* ***waiting period is the one which sparked*** *the violence. So while I was waiting for the results, I* ***would diarise*** *what had been said, the following day, and the following day. I remember that almost every day I was* ***writing something in my diary.*** *And then of course then the* ***disappearances*** *started after it was announced that there would be a presidential run-off because there was no clear winner. That period of run-off, I still remember that even what I was writing was* ***also a bit violent*** *as well because* ***there were emotions,*** *it was now* ***becoming emotional****. That you have read about this thing and it* ***has touched you*** *so much that somebody* ***has lost a father****,* ***somebody has lost a mother****, ehe, that. (C21).*

The media have made ***me more critical****. I now have* ***a critical eye****,that eye which, how can I put it?, with a mind-set that, no, no, this is what we are talking about* (C4).

These, the reporting, I can say ***have reinforced people's support on party lines,*** *it has* ***reinforced.*** *If it is an MDC-T supporter reading the independent newspapers his support for MDC-T has been* ***reinforced*** *because of that coverage. If it is a Zanu (PF) supporter and the reporting of state media, Herald and so on have* ***reinforced*** *his or her support for Zanu (PF).* (C20).

Eh, many people became ***hard line*** *in terms of opposing Zanu (PF). Ehe. That actually worked against Zanu (PF). Though unfortunately an incident yes, so it drew* ***people to hate Zanu (PF),*** *the perpetrators, the supposed perpetrators. So in a way it influenced the perception. So what you report is very important****. If you report falsehoods they will affect people****. (C11).*

The statements show that far from making citizens apathetic towards politics press reports on election violence elicit various forms of engagement with politics, some subtle, some not so subtle. Reporting on election violence can foster certain forms of political consciousness and engagements that have far-reaching implications for democratic politics.

It can lead to entrenched citizen's political convictions, push citizens to re-affirm their political affiliations, make citizens engage with news more critically than before or trigger a flurry of subtle forms of political activism. Thus the press affects citizens in different ways, depending on their social and political circumstances. The exact manner and the socio-economic and political circumstances in which the press engender political engagement or disengagement, however needs further investigation.

7.5 Critical Readers: Engaged Citizenry

Citizen discourses demonstrate the way in which the press has been reporting on election violence has spawned new practices of negotiating news content in the context of polarisation. Such practices include triangulating news sources and reading the news more analytically than before as a way of coping with a polarised *mediascape*.

As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, citizens reported that they read more than one newspaper for news and information about elections. Upon further inspection it was established that the rationale for the triangulation of sources was that they were not satisfied with the way news on election violence was reported by a single newspaper.

Almost every respondent talked about reading "other newspapers" in order to get a balanced or complete picture of events. By reading more than one newspaper or consulting alternative sources of news such as social media like Facebook and user generated comments became a form of self-empowerment by the citizens.

Reading a variety of news sources enabled them to establish the veracity of certain reports on election as well as "resisting" undue influence by the partisan press. Although respondents differed in their degree of apportioning culpability to the press, most respondents agreed the press had serious shortfalls in reporting election violence. In order to safeguard themselves against these shortfalls citizens, adopted particular reading practices, such as cross-checking with alternative news sources either in the printed press or online.

The following statements illustrate this:

*Being **able to read** all the newspapers, I am satisfied because I was actually, I **could pick** what has **been hidden** by this paper in a different paper.* (C5).

*What I have observed is that **if I read** all the newspapers on a particular story, let's say a story about political violence in Mudzi, **what I do is I try to find out** if the particular story has been published in the Daily News, **has it also been published** in News Day and **how it is being framed** in all these newspapers. If it is **treated** in the same way in both newspapers **then I try to find out whether** the same story has also been published in The Herald, how it has been **covered** in the paper. If it has been published and **treated** in the same way as well I will then accept that it is a true story **but** if the story is only published in one newspaper, **I will have to keep on checking** for the story in order to **establish its veracity**.* (C6).

*Ok, what was actually happening was that, you always hear all negative aspects especially the opposition. And then **as a person who has brains** you **ask yourself** why this person is always writing something which is negative. And then, you then want to **investigate** and you see that OK how is the situation like. So at the end of the day, as a result, especially the issue of the press, I have resorted now to now to the electronic media, social networks which gives us the other side of the story for me to cross-check, to **find out how** the situation is like. And as a result again the effect of that coverage, it is now causing, I have alluded to the fact that, normally the reporting, it's not balanced, you now tend to read a variety of a-a, so that you get to the **gist** of the matter. (C11).*

*Ya, this kinds of complicates things for the reader in terms of…though with the coming of new technology such as Facebook and so forth, **you check** through the Internet, whether people in those areas are agreed with the facts. For example, The Herald Online or the News Day Online people comment on the news article confirming whether it **is true or not.** Then you **can see** whether there has been violence in those areas or not. (C1).*

Citizens construct themselves as active agents in their interaction with news about election violence in the sense that they question, interrogate, and interact with what they read critically. They go out of their way to look for different sources so that they have a balanced view of what is happening on the ground. This is testimony that the press in Zimbabwe lacks internal diversity, particularly in relation to election issues.

Voltmer (2010, 144) defines internal diversity as "a situation in which a single media outlet comprises all relevant points without favouring a particular position".

The above statements show that citizens actively seek alternative views in order to balance their perspectives on the topics different diverse views at both the agenda-setting level (the topics published by the newspapers) and the framing level (the angling, slanting and general treatment given to particular stories). There is an array of words and phrases in the above excerpts which demonstrate that citizens are critical and proactive in their interaction with news on election violence. Such words and phrases include "able to read", "I could pick", "If I read", "what I do is", "I try to find out", "how it is being framed", "I will have to keep on checking", "as a person who has brains", "investigate" and "I find out". This is an affirmation that citizens are active seekers of alternative perspectives and accentuates their cognitive abilities to question, and analyse what they read, a point that will be revisited below.

The fact that citizens look for alternative information from online media sources validates the argument that in future citizens will have more options to undercut partisan political reporting by acting as a "parallel market" (Moyo 2010, 53), particularly in political contexts where information is held in the interregnum (Saunders, 1991).

Apart from their efforts to look for alternative sources of information the agency of the citizens is also vocalised through discourses that accentuate citizens' cognitive abilities to critique press reportage of election violence. Thus respondents talked about how they were able to circumvent the negative influence of the press by being able to "read in-between the lines" analyse news and information on electoral violence. Citizens talk about their ability to spot information gaps in the news, discrepancies between media reality and actual reality or do an aberrant decoding of the news and their skeptical dispositions.

The following excerpts from the interviews highlight this skepticism:

And I think if you really want to know what is going on it's a matter of ***reading in-between the lines*** *because their coverage I can say it's predictable or it's pre-determined. (C19).*

If you ***read in between the lines*** *you can sense that this newspaper is trying to campaign for this one, this one is trying…..They don't actually cover fairly, giving a balanced view of it, but you could sense that this one is maybe campaigning for this particular party, this one is for this particular party. You can sense from the way they write their, the way they report, from they report.* (C8).

And I think if you really want to know what is going on it's a matter of ***reading in-between the lines*** *because their coverage I can say it's predictable or it's pre-determined. (C19).*

I think, I think this is…the challenge we have here in Zimbabwe, I think it just confirms what I have heard from so many people that when you buy newspapers you have got to buy two, one that you know that it supports this dispensation and one that supports that dispensation then you read the same article and probably try ***to do content analysis*** *and really establish what happened. So there is a general lack of an ideal newspaper which can tell you what really happened. (C17).*

What I normally do is I can read The Herald, but after finishing reading it I will say I now know The Herald's version of events now, ***let me get*** *the Independent's version so that I get a* ***balanced*** *view of events because I know that The Herald is pro-Zanu (PF). The Independent, most of the independent newspapers are biased in favour of the opposition, so I read the independent newspapers,* ***I read the public media*** *and then afterwards I look for the middle ground and say, The Standard is saying ABC about the issue, so maybe this could have happened. (C14).*

These statements demonstrate that citizens do not swallow everything that they read but critically interrogate media texts and are skeptical, if not cynical of what they get from the press. They construct themselves are "privileged discursive actors" in the political communication process who are able to analyse media texts and come up with their own "balanced" assessments of the situation.

This enlightened autonomy" (Garcia-Blanco, 2011, 178) implies that although citizens may disengage from politics they are far from being passive. If anything disengagement can be viewed as a form of engagement, albeit negative engagement.

Thus citizens have the ability to insert themselves in the political communication process as active discursive actors with the capacity to challenge hegemonic representations of the press.

7.6 Normative Prescriptions: A Manifesto for Conflict Reporting

The participants in this study did not just register their misgivings about press reporting of election violence, but went further to proffer normative prescriptions of reporting election in general and election violence in particular. When they talked about limitations of the press in reporting election violence they also suggested how the press should report. Apart from the normative ethical and professional considerations such as fairness, balance, objectivity, accuracy, impartiality, neutrality and truthfulness, participants repeatedly mentioned the need for evidential reporting, the need to engage in objectivist journalism while shunning interpretive journalism. In relation to the need to observe general journalistic ethics the following statements are illustrative:

> *The media should just give people a **fair** report of what would have transpired. I think that would make certain people control themselves because some of the violence is a result of certain individuals failing to control themselves. There is a need for fair reporting on some of these issues.* (C2).

> *Under the circumstances if journalists from all the newspapers could have time to have their own meetings with no-holds barred talk, then they use the **correct ethics** of reporting, a situation or a scenario openly without fear or favour I think that, that can improve the situation.* (12).

> *If an **accurate** coverage is done it is now left to the electorate to say, with his faults craftily covered to the extent that only the good part is what comes out, is that not misleading the voter into voting a person that you would later regret voting for, when that person is already in office. (*C18).

> *What I would prefer is that whatever is happening in the form of violence should be covered **without fear or favour** and the citizens must know what is happening in the different parts of the country and be aware, it might be someone's relative in Mutoko or someone has a relative in Bulawayo. If it is not covered then you are not able to know what is happening in Matabeleland or what is happening in Mashonaland. Some of these things should be highlighted and should actually be **presented properly.** (C5).*

> *Maybe if they are to report the **facts** as they are. (C3)*

Citizens construct the press reporting of election violence as devoid of journalistic ethics. However, citizen discourses go beyond orthodox journalistic ethics in that they propose ethical approaches that are unique to the reportage of election violence as a special kind of journalistic beat.

For instance, a number of respondents recommended what could be referred to as "evidence based" reporting, a form of reporting that entails the press furnishing concrete evidence to support stories on election violence. Such evidence could be in the form of audio-visual material which proves beyond any shadow of doubt that a particular incident took place.

The following excerpts from the interviews support the necessity of evidence-reporting thus:

> *Unless the media support what they report with **audio and visuals,** there is no way of knowing whether what they report on is true or not. But the problem in Zimbabwe is that even if you see a photograph of a person who is alleged to have been beaten up say, in Muzarabani because of this and this, you may find that the people in the photography maybe, were involved in a family fight, which is now being presented as election violence. The picture might be there but the reporter is not telling you what was happening. What this means is that what the media give us is not authentic at times.* (C2).

> *…especially, where some newspapers which publish **pictures** to substantiate their claims. So in that case I definitely agree that the levels in the newspapers match with what will be happening on the ground because **you can actually see it**. Like what happened in 2008 there were people who were burnt, there were people who were amputated; people who were beaten etc. you can actually see these people. You will definitely think that the level of violence is high. Then there are situations whereby the press report that the level of election violence is high but you can't see it. I will end up thinking that someone is **fabricating** the news, somebody who is just **reporting** from his office without any knowledge of what is happening out there. (C14)*

> *I would like to believe that if the same way or the newspapers if it is completed by the, complemented by the **electronic media** we can get firsthand information of what they are saying. Because what is written in the newspaper, I can say a statement can **be interpreted** in any way they like but if everyone is given the same access to **television, electronic** media to have first have **first-hand** information of what they **have seen,** what I can say, what they can improve is if really a person has commented on something, why not quote him, why **not publish his picture** and so on, so that we see that this is the person, maybe that person will fear political punishment and so on, but we need **their facts to,** we need **the facts to**, to come out clearly to*

be reinforced by other means. So I think, I am not a media person per se, but what I think is for the media to respect ethical reporting. I think that's the best way. If the media just follows, eh, their rules and regulations of media reporting to say where, when and who and so on. I don't know, and to ***get comments*** *from all the political parties, whatever, if they just stick to* ***good reporting practices****, the elements which they are taught on…If they can just stick to what they were taught at school… And in terms of online reporting what I can say is if the newspapers publish their article online, can it also, that story , the online story, can it also have accompanying evidence like audio. Isn't it? If you get a comment from the minister, you got a comment, you write it in the newspaper, we can say a newspaper cannot have another attachment but if you go online can I also have, can I also hear that audio recording. If you have got it from the Minister or the political figure, whoever said it in that the sense it is being reported. (C20).*

Citizens construct press reporting on election violence as suffering from a credibility crisis which could be addressed through evidential reporting in the form of audio-visuals and hard facts. As a highly contested beat election reporting is prone to fabrications, speculations and second-hand views which compromise the credibility of the press. Beyond this fact-based reporting citizens are also averse to interpretative journalism in election reporting. They advocate objectivist journalism whereby the press report without infusing their opinions. Respondents construct the interpretative style of reporting unsuitable for election reporting because interpretative journalism seeks to interpret rather than report the news. The respondents viewed the judgmental character of interpretative journalism as complicity in fuelling election violence rather than curbing it. The following statements are illustrative of this:

First of all I would suggest that maybe if they are to report the ***facts as they are*** *rather than taking one side and say the other party is innocent like you get a reporter actually* ***judging*** *or rather* ***putting a stamp*** *saying* ***this party is the one to blame*** *for every incident of political violence. I think that shouldn't be the case because it actually* ***encourages*** *other party members to act upon and* ***actually cause violence*** *because they would be in a* ***retaliatory*** *mode because of the reports that would have been made by the newspapers because they actually know that they are not the sole cause of election violence and yet the newspaper reports would be saying* ***they are the sole causes*** *of election violence. So if they are just to report the facts because I think that the reporters' duty is to* ***report the facts*** *and nothing else but the facts* ***not to take a side****. (C3).*

So if they could report it in a way that could show that no, this is a dispute between people and people should resolve their disputes in a manner that's Ok. But now we have violence reported in one paper, they say no, the guys who ***were wrong*** *were those guys. Then if it's reported in another newspaper, they say*

*those guys are the ones who **were wrong**. **Just report the details**, you see, such and such a thing happened at such and such a place. Not to say no, you see **because the people are disgruntled** with his 33 year rule, no. That becomes irrelevant. Or that because these people feel like the sanctions came from…they are now getting, that's where elections and violence begin to, to mix. They should **report violence as violence**. They should say, they should not however say that the people who were participating whether from Zanu (PF) or from what, but they should **not express it** as a way of you know, the **elections are the cause of this violence** and what, what. It's because people will always have different opinions and people should find better ways to iron out their differences.* ***(C13).***

*On their part I think it's good to report **objectively without putting opinions.** Yes. I have seen it in the independent newspapers where the **journalists' opinion** is attached to a report to say it's believed that this incident was perpetrated by Zanu (PF) support and to me I don't know whose belief it is, or **who believed,** "**it's believed**" by whom? I have seen also "**it's believed this act violence was perpetrated by MDC supporters**" I have had cases, I can single out cases of, in Manicaland where there was a case of Maisiri something, something in the newspapers, whose hut was burnt, what, what and so on. But eh, we don't know whether it was an act of arson or it was on political lines. No one knows. So it's good if facts are not yet there.* ***(C20).***

Words and phrases such as "violence", "judging", "putting a stamp", "blame", "encourages", "causes violence", and "were wrong" indicate that citizens abhor interpretative journalism in reporting election violence because interpretative journalism lends itself to opinionated reporting as well as accentuating the "blame discourse" all of which are recipes for election violence. In order to show that citizens prefer objectivist journalism words and phrases such as "facts as they are", "report the facts", "not express", objectively", "without putting opinions", "objectively" and "just report details" are used. The respondents believe that the interpretative reporting style is deeply implicated in election violence.

The respondents also talked about the imperative for follow-ups in reporting election violence. They pointed out that follow-ups act as deterrents to would-be perpetrators of election violence in the sense that they created confidence among members of the public when justice is done or at the very least when it is seen to be done.

The respondents complained about how the press failed to keep track of major cases of election violence resulting in public disillusionment about the efficacy of the justice system to curb election violence.

The following excerpts from the interview illustrate this:

Eh, what I would like actually to happen is that it must for all, all the newspapers must really make a ***follow-up,*** *eh, really a* ***follow-up*** *to every incident and come to a* ***definite conclusion****, result,* ***the end result,*** *what has happened to the person who did that particular activity. Because if the results are not* ***disclosed*** *that means people will continue to perpetrate punishments, eh, sentences, must be really highlighted so that you* ***can curb, curb, the violence****.* *(C5).*

But coming to the issue of follow-ups it's something that I have discussed with a colleague as well, that at times when things are written, the journalist who is covering the story, I don't know whether it is the norm these days or it's just a case ***of dereliction of duty*** *on the part of the journalists. Its unlike if you read stories covered by veteran journalists who can bring you out* ***records*** *of what happened in 2002, 2003, this is what happened in 2004, 2004… There is no longer that element of* ***research*** *that you get in a story for you to really see that there has been* ***a follow-up****. Because, maybe if they had* ***followed up*** *these things they could have discovered that maybe when the farm invasions took place in 1999, 2000 there some after effects later regarding that. If it was the issue of avenging spirits they can then tell us that in Chipinge a similar issue once happened, this way or that way. But there is nothing, there is nothing which could have been a* ***precedent*** *of the Chokuda case. There are really no* ***follow-ups*** *on election violence stories that we can see…And also now, people are talking about it on social media, on Facebook. People are putting some comments, saying aah; we don't want violence, whatever whatever. I think if the newspaper takes these seriously and then* ***document*** *cases of violence that happened and what happened to the* ***perpetrators*** *as well. Because it seems that in this country you don't really see* ***justice being served.*** *(C21).*

In the independent press there is ***no follow-up****. They raise an issue today,* ***its dead.*** *Tomorrow there is no* ***follow up*** *which takes place. If you hear of it again….So there is* ***no follow-up.*** (C4).

The perceived failure by the press to make follow-ups signifies that the human costs of election violence makes election violence a unique genre that requires special journalistic skills if violence is to be curbed. The perception that the press was failing to give complete accounts of election violence motivated citizens to use alternative sources of news such as online media, thus highlighting of the potency of new media technologies in obviating the limitations of the press.

The respondents constructed election violence reporting as a story-telling genre, with a beginning, middle and an ending. They expect the press to highlight precedents, antecedents and the consequences of perpetrating election violence.

They believe that this will curb violence. This view of political reporting is predicated on the assumption that failure to show the logical conclusion of election violence is a form of symbolically rewarding perpetrators of election violence. This way election reporting becomes preoccupied with identifying connections between different incidences of election violence through research and documentation. Citizens construct election reporting as a tool for deterring would be perpetrators as well as curbing election violence. This way, election reporting becomes some kind of deductive media akin to the folk-tale. To be able to execute their democratic mandate, the press is expected to report election violence fairly, impartially and to give a complete account of what would have transpired.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed citizen discourses on election violence based on the corpus of text from interviews with 21 purposely selected citizens of Zimbabwe. The analysis focused on three key questions relating to how citizens make sense of election violence, how they evaluate press the reporting of election violence and the normative prescriptions than can guide the press in reporting elections.

The chapter argues that citizen discourses on election violence reveal a complex conception of the causes, attributes, and manifestations of election violence that are circumscribed by Zimbabwe's history, social, economic and political context of the country. The respondents' understanding of election violence fits into the framework and typologies of election violence propounded by earlier studies, but also bring to the fore the conceptions of election violence coloured by the uniqueness of their experiences and socio-political context. Thus, they talk about election violence as "sponsored", "isolated", "exceptional", and "relative". They also construct a variety of discourses in relation to the causes of election violence, but mainly foreground its nexus with power contests and as part of a historical continuum dating back to the colonial period.

Citizen assessments of press reporting of election violence mainly relate to consequences of framing such as polarisation, exaggerations, interpretive journalism and critical engagements with texts. Thus citizens construct themselves as active agents with a capacity to interrogate press texts at different levels. They are skeptical, critical (even cynical) about the way in which the press reports, thereby signaling the existence of agency.

In relation to normative prescriptions, citizens also prescribe a number of standards and practices for reporting election violence. Although some of these normative prescriptions are generic to traditional journalism others are specific to election violence reporting and are informed by the imperatives of conflict sensitivity. Citizen normative journalistic prescriptions are a response to the need for credibility of the press in contexts where information is in the interregnum. The range of citizen discourses on election violence discussed in this chapter demonstrate that citizens construct themselves as privileged discursive actors in the political communication process rather than passive victims on the political chessboard.

Further, citizens construct election violence as a unique genre that can be effectively instrumentalised to curb election violence

CHAPTER EIGHT: PROBING THE INTERFACE: COMPARING CITIZEN AND PRESS DISCOURSES ON ELECTION VIOLENCE

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the interaction between press discourses (Chapters Five and Six) and citizen discourses (Chapter Seven) on election violence by bringing the two into dialogue in order to gain deeper insights on the political and cultural values that underpin the social construction of election violence. It compares and contrasts press and citizen discourses focusing on three themes, namely, the conception of election violence, the framing of election violence, and the influence of press discourses on citizen attitudes and practices.

The chapter concludes by reflecting on the theoretical implications of the interface between press and citizen discourses for democratic theory and motivates for the revitalisation of the concept of political culture in understanding this interface. The chapter addresses three key questions, namely;

- What are the similarities and differences between press and citizen discourses on election violence?
- How do press and citizens discourses on election violence interact and shape each other?
- What are the implications for the interplay between press and citizen discourses on democracy?

In order to address these questions a synthesis of the data presented in Chapter Five, Six and Seven is done in order to tease out the mutual interrelation between press and citizen discourses with the ultimate aim of gaining insights on the values, norms beliefs and practices that underpin discursive constructions of election violence in fragile societies (Voltmer and Dobreva 2009, 2).

The chapter argues that the interface between press and citizen discourses represents a zone in which a society's political culture is paraded, contested as well as altered.

Although citizen narratives about election violence incorporate a great deal of the press's frames, they also represent counterpoints to the hegemonic constructions of the press whereby election violence is instrumentalised for capturing or retaining political power. This contest is played out through the interpretive journalistic posture of the press and the normative objectivist stance of the citizens.

In a context where the press is deeply embedded in political structures information becomes a "manufactured artifice" the integrity of the public sphere is diminished and as Brian McNair argues, it's "authenticity becomes something rather more sinister" (McNair 1995, 25).

8.2 Making Sense of Election Violence: Contest and Confluence

Citizen conceptions of election violence, to some degree mirror those of the press, particularly in respect of their characterisation of election violence as organised, instrumentalised, orchestrated and historical. However, there is a minor disjuncture as well. For instance, while the press mainly focused on physical (visible) election violence, citizen discourses are cross-cutting, encompassing some elements of subtle election violence such as intimidation, verbal threats, and other discrete forms of coercion.

Citizens conceive election violence in a wider sense, reflective of the richness of their mediated and lived experiences, thus making citizen discourses on election violence more authoritative than those of the press. Citizen discourses encompass both 'noisy' and "quiet' forms of election violence (Reif 2009, 6) in that they read about election violence as well as experience it during elections. Thus citizens' narratives on election violence bore imprints of their lived experiences of election violence as well the mediated reality. For practical reasons the press mostly focuses on physical election violence because it occurs in the public domain and its dramaturgy lends itself to certain criteria for newsworthiness, marked by episodic framing and sentimentalism. On the contrary, citizen narratives on election violence transcend rehearsals of election violence by incorporating the real life experiences of victims, audiences and interpersonal interactions.

Thus citizens conceive election violence through the prism of its most subtle like the 'singing of parody songs' and 'lampooning' other political parties, 'utterances', or simply 'forcing someone to think in a certain way' (see Chapter Seven). Citizen conceptions of electoral violence bring physical violence into the communicative and symbolic realm thereby projecting election violence as a form of language or discourse through which a society's political attitudes, beliefs and communicative practices can be understood. In this context, the type of political discourse signals impending physical violence.

Reif (2009, 6) asserts thus:

> There is more than meets the eye to election violence. The eruption of physical election violence is the result of sequences of events and constellation of factors that affect actors' decisions to choose one strategy over another from the "menu of manipulation" (Andreas Schedler 2002a) which in addition to fraud includes what I term "quiet" (non-physical and often unobservable) and "noisy"(physical and observable) coercion.

By placing election violence in a wider frame, citizen discourses bring under the spotlight the interconnectedness of physical violence with its symbolic forms. Thus, the physical elements of election violence are always inscribed in a "symbolic economy", whereby, "…the symbolic impact of the very physical violence; ideological apparatuses always- already prepare the ground for the exercise of physical violence" by legitimising the use of force in defence of national interests (Zizek 1996, 16).

It needs to be pointed out that although the newspapers selected for this study did not focus much on subtle forms of election violence, there were some instances where (particularly the state press) they focused on overt forms of election violence. The case of 'utterances' by MDC politicians, Madzore and Chamisa discussed in Chapter Six are examples. There were also references by the privately-owned press on acts of intimidation, "pulling down of posters", but these were not given sufficient attention[44].

[44] A few journalists also mentioned subtle forms of election violence such as hate speech but did not dwell much on it.

By conceiving election violence largely as covert, while downplaying its subtle forms, the press tended to view election violence through a narrow prism which failed to capture the full gamut of election violence in Zimbabwe. As a consequence, overt and covert election violence were erroneously conceived as disconnected. Through this simplistic lens overt and covert election violence were viewed as disconnected rather than interlinked. This goes against the grain of scholarly opinion that suggests that the press can polarise society or even incite violence through the language it uses to report events (Nwankow 2011; Ismail and Dean 2008; Chari 2010; Thompson 2007; Bonde n.d. Coronell, n.d.), a scenario that has been referred to as the 'Rwanda Model'[45](Onyebadi and Oyedeji 2011). Discourse has a consequence, and so does language. The rationale for physical violence is rooted in symbolic violence.

Steuter and Wills (2009, 7) note how the Canadian media, during the war in Iraq and Afghanistan engaged in an "uncritical reproduction of metaphors that linguistically frame the enemy" in a manner that de-humanized and de-individualized the 'enemy-Other', thereby rendering the enemy expendable. Similarly, Lakoff (1991), through an analysis of metaphors used by George Bush (senior) and his administration concluded that Iraq would be attacked during the Gulf War. Lakoff argues that the panorama of metaphors used to describe Saddam Hussein by Bush and other US government officials indicated that an attack on Iraq was inevitable. For instance, the US Secretary of State viewed Saddam Hussein as "sitting on our economic lifeline", while President Bush described Saddam as having "a stranglehold"on the US economy. Saddam's occupation of Kuwait was described by General Scwarzkopf as "rape"" and the presence of the US military in the Gulf region was described by Bush as justified on the grounds of protecting "freedom", "our future" and "the innocent". Further, Saddam was portrayed as a "Hitler" who needed to be "pushed back", thereby suggesting that an attack on Iraq was inevitable (Lakoff 1991). This demonstrates that symbolic violence can be a prelude to physical violence.

[45] Reference to the role of hate language radio during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda where thousands of people died after the broadcast of hate messages on radio.

From a discourse analysis point of view, this is significant in that, as a form of social practice discourse "both constitutes the social world and is constituted by other social practices" (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 61). A narrower conception of election violence which privileges physical violence at the expense of non-physical violence suits the constricted logic of the press in two respects.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, physical violence lends itself to newsworthiness in keeping with the dictum "if it bleeds, it leads" (Meadow 2009, 232). Physical violence lends itself to interpretive journalism because the press has the leverage to "mix personal attitudes and factual reporting" (Bonde, n.d., 14) and make imputations that either discredit the opponent or legitimise the political party they would be rooting for through euphemistic language. Such a conception of election violence is limiting in that it does not enable one to gain deeper insights into election violence as a key ingredient of a society's political culture. The assumption in this thesis is that election violence is rooted in societal structures, culture, language, discourse, and everyday practices and interactions. For instance, a significant number of the respondents in the category of citizens talked about election violence as being sometimes 'mischaracterised' by the press in the sense that some of what the press reports as election violence were most likely ordinary fights which arose from some long-standing vendettas between people who knew each other, but were opportunistically revived during election time to settle scores.

One respondent said that:

> *Violence, violence, it's very unfortunate that its existence in society, like in 2008 there was a lot of mistrust among people and there was a lot of grudges, there was a lot of …all sorts of things. Maybe I have a personal score with, between you and me, right? Eh, it was the opportune time for somebody to settle that score in the guise of politics. Some, in the guise of politics… Some of these things really, because you will be surprised because people who would have fought if they were to be sat down one-on-one to say tell us, where are you differing you may find that their conflict has nothing to do with politics but they will just be using politics as an excuse. These are people who would have harboured grudges against one another. Like it was said that in the rural areas people are burning each other's homesteads… Some of these people would be having long time vendettas against one another, but will be waiting for an opportunity to settle those scores. When they see that their enemies are perceived to be now on the weaker side-the receiving end. Then someone will say this is my time. Like how it is at the moment here and there you hear about political violence, then the following week* (C4).

Reference to election violence as a spirit (discussed in Chapter Seven) reflects a wider conception of election violence among citizen discourses in the sense that election violence is elevated to the spiritual and metaphysical realms, thus constructing it as a complex phenomenon. Election violence does not always manifest itself in an explainable manner, but is sometimes camouflaged in social struggles which are opportunistically portrayed as political conflicts by the press. Thus election violence provides a fertile ground for accentuating these struggles. This affirms De Los Rios's argument that any attempts to conceptualise political violence (and by the same reasoning) must recognise that election violence should entail "addressing the notion of power" (De Los Rios 2009, 29). De Los Rios (2009, 30) rightly observes that election violence is "driven by desires for power that lead people to transgress others' private domains". Although De Los Rios was referring to political violence in its broad sense, this is equally true in relation to election violence during Zimbabwean elections held between 2000 and 2013 in that the retention or acquisition of power was the main motivation behind particular discursive constructions.

It is instructive to note that citizens construct conceptions of election violence that contradict those of the press, an indication that citizens do not always imbibe what they read in the newspapers. Citizen agency is demonstrated when they question the authenticity of some acts of election violence and the opportunistic instrumentalisation of election violence by political parties to gain power.

Citing Neuman et al, Shah, Domke and Wackman (2001, 229) note that mass media audiences "do not slavishly follow the framing of issues presented in the mass media" but rather "actively filter, sort, and recognize information in personally meaningful ways in constructing an understanding of public issues". Shah et al further note that when they are "confronted with information, individuals are thought to first locate relevant schemas to guide processing" (Shah et al. 2009, 229). This shows that the interface between press and citizen discourses is a zone in which meanings about election violence are negotiated, constructed and reconstructed again.

Hall (1997, 44) notes that "discourse is about the production of knowledge through language…since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do - our conduct - all practices have a discursive aspect".

Locating the meaning of election violence within the press and citizen discursive interface immerses us into the various ways in which election violence is talked and thought about, and how that language makes thoughts, talk, practices and journalistic reports meaningful (Hobbs 2008, 7). Compared to press reports, citizen discourses reflect election violence in a complex way and relate it to broader violence in society. This demonstrates that election violence has multiple dimensions spanning a number of ideological perspectives. It could be argued that the polarisation of the press along political lines contributed to the overt manner in which the press represented electoral violence in Zimbabwe.

As discussed in Chapter Six, political polarisation made it difficult for the press to report election violence in a dispassionate manner in the sense that their alignment to political parties forced the press to forsake the professional and 'objectivist' approach as they became highly politicised resulting in a blurred distinction between journalism and activism.

This point is illustrated by the statement by a journalist working for the privately owned press who said:

> *I think eh, the polarisation for me it's, it's a big problem. Sometimes I feel journalists have become politicians more than journalists, which, which I find very sad. Ah, and because they have aligned themselves to certain parties, they choose to either ignore or to exaggerate certain stories which is in line with their ability. I think we have moved away from that period when we started when a journalist was…Even here they ask you "who do you support? You can't tell me that you don't support…". Even in the newsroom. You know what I mean? That eh "who do you support; you must support certain political parties". Which is not the journalism that I was taught. So I think in terms of our professionalism, eh, eh, I think we are on the decline, because of this polarisation. Yeah. Which is very, very sad? Very few journalists, you can count that have remained, eh, eh balanced. Most are not. They are activists. Actually, I want to call them activists. Journalists have become activists (laughs). They are no longer journalists* (J4).

The view that journalistic practice borders on activist journalism is echoed by Group Editor-in-Chief at Alpha Media Holdings, Vincent Kahiya thus:

> *When we set about to cover the elections, when we set about, let me talk about our institution first. First thing we had to come up remind all of us editors, reporters about ethical guidelines. To the extent that I sent out a little document, just an ethical guideline on elections, reminding ourselves about that.* ***Reporters are political creatures****. They have got* ***political aspirations****, and the* ***inclination to become activist's journalists*** *is always there, the appetite by* ***journalists to root for political parties in their personal capacities is reflected a lot in stories.*** *So the challenge was taking journalists out of stories, and say, I always say to a certain journalist take yourself out the story and replace yourself with the people. Aah, so that was one challenge which is an internal challenge which is an internal challenge* (Interview with Vincent Kahiya, 2 September 2013, Harare)

Whether it is politics that polarises the press or the press that polarises society is debatable. Judging from the statements above it is plausible to argue that the press and politics shaped each other during elections and the discursive construction of elections was driven by political imperatives the upshot of which was the anti-democratic discursive practices. For instance, as discussed in Chapter Six, the perceptions of external threats forced the state-owned press to mobilise a political economy of nationalist discourses that relegated human rights issues to the back burner. As argued by *The Sunday Mail* Acting Editor, Mabasa Sasa, perceptions of

"threats", "external interference", and "meddling in our politics" meant that the state-owned press became

> *…more robust in defence of the national interest…not just in a defensive manner, but to go on the offensive in defence of our country…As this external threat became more and more apparent we have to be more robust in our responses to the threat…our intent being, ah, upholding the integrity of the state* (Interview with Mabasa Sasa, Harare, 15 May 2015).

In the polarised political and electoral context, this robustness in defence of the national interest could mean anything ranging from cover-ups, glossing over incidents of election violence, to outright lies depending on who the alleged perpetrator of election violence was. Similarly, the private-press did not feel obliged to verify allegations of election violence as long as Zanu (PF) or the state was the alleged perpetrator, with the consequence that privately-owned press became prone to manipulation by its sources.

Owing to its skepticism about the sincerity and commitment of Zanu (PF) to upholding peaceful elections, the privately-owned press prejudged the peacefulness or lack thereof, of elections (such as the 2013 harmonised elections) on account of the country's previous record, thereby creating apprehension among the populace. As already indicated earlier in Dumisani Muleya's statement, such skepticism appears to be justified on the the private press's view that ruling party politicians are dodgy, have a penchant for dishonesty and most of the time tend to indicate right while actually "turning left".

Such skepticism and the highly "highly politicized" (Skjerdal 2011, 1) politicized nature of the press resulted in the press failing to report election violence accurately and impartially because of their preconceived ideas regarding who the perpetrator and the victim of election violence were. This contradicts the normative ideals of the press prescribed by citizens whereby the press reports on election violence factually and dispassionately rather than infusing its opinions in the news reports.

One respondent succinctly captured the judgmental approach of the press to reporting election violence thus:

> *…are to report the facts as they are rather than taking one side and say the other party is innocent like you get a reporter actually judging or rather putting a stamp saying this party is the one to blame for every incident of political violence. I think that shouldn't be the case because it actually encourages other party members to act upon and actually cause violence because they would be in a retaliatory mode because of the reports that would have been made by the newspapers because they actually know that they are not the sole causes of election violence and yet the newspaper reports would be saying they are the sole causes of election violence. So if they are just to report the facts, because I think that the reporters' duty is to report the facts and nothing else but the facts not to take a side (C3).*

In the larger discursive scheme, what is critical is HOW the press framed election violence and how this framing shaped citizens' perceptions and attitudes about election violence in Zimbabwe.

8.3 Framing Election Violence: Versions, Sub-Versions and Convergence

The data from interviews with citizens reveals that citizens did not unproblematically accept the polarised frames on the election violence proffered by the press. While the press framed election violence in binary terms the citizens generated multiple perspectives. For instance, citizens rejected framing which depicted the ruling party, Zanu (PF) as the perpetrator and the opposition MDC as the innocent victim polarity.

Contrary to press portrayal of election violence as a perpetual struggle between 'Good and Evil', citizens mobilise multiple discourses whereby election violence was projected through a congealment of historical, political, economic and social factors. Citizens projected election violence as embedded in everyday discursive practices rather than simply as a phenomenon associated with elections.

The majority of respondents in the category of citizens viewed election violence as a two-sided affair pitting the ruling party, Zanu (PF) and the opposition, the MDC, although they did not attribute equal blame to the two political parties.

This view was mainly undergirded by instrumentalist notions of election violence whereby election violence is conceived as a tool for gaining or retaining power.

The binary view of election violence oversimplifies a complex issue by projecting election violence as senseless. Thus, press discourses on election violence accentuate a moralistic stance whereby election violence is attributable to the inherent moral and political bankruptcy of a particular party. Devices employed by the press, such as nomination, exnomination, selectivity, hyperbole, humanistic rhetoric, depersonalisation, personalisation, demonization (discussed in Chapter Five and Six) mask the reality of election violence rather illuminate it. Such anti-democratic discursive practices have the potential to predispose society to conflict rather than towards consensus.

Citizens provided a rich tapestry of the complexities of election violence, reflecting on its underlying causes as well as on the assumptions about its intersection with power. Unlike press discourses which framed election violence in binary terms, citizen discourses construct election violence through multiple lenses, locating election violence across and within political formations. Thus citizen discourses contradict the polarising frames of election violence whereby violence is blamed on one political party and not the other.

Citizen discourses foreground structural, behavioural and institutional factors as contributors to election violence. They also talked about external factors such as sanctions as indirect contributors to election violence. Citizen discourses provided alternative approaches for thinking and talking about election violence and the role of the press during elections. These alternative frames locate election violence in the realm of the wider societal political culture rather than a stereotypical trait of particular political parties. Citizens attribute election violence to varied factors including “hunger for power” (C1), intolerance, (C3), media reportage (C4 and C18), poverty and unemployment (C1 and C5), ignorance (C6 and C 21), land reform (C20) and “sponsored political parties and newspapers”(C9).

The excerpts below are illustrative:

In Zimbabwe, it's mostly because of the hunger for power by the parties involved, and also I think we are lacking in terms of maturity, in terms of learning how to conduct ourselves or how to gain power. We lack an understanding of the whole concept…. We can also talk of political immaturity. And also fear, like some, we can say, fear of loss of power. There are parties who are trying to protect their power through violence (C1).

I think one of the main causes of election violence is the issue of power. It's like a competition, like a soccer match. Isn't it? So everyone who will be contesting like the situation that we are in at the moment, everyone who is contesting wants to win but it now depends on the techniques and strategies that one believes can make him win. Does the individual believe that one can win by simply trying to persuade them or intimidating people so that they vote for you and so on? That is what usually causes election violence because someone may believe that if he threatens or beats people and because of the fear factor they will vote for him (C7).

It's a desire for power. The desire for power under every circumstance. By any means necessary. You want to remain in power; you want to get into power, without anything. Then that is, that causes violence (C5).

I think the causes have to do with power. And power is not in ordinary people. It's power of people who are above, the leaders. That's where there is too much hunger for power. So if people are power hungry for power they will go out of their way to gain power by hook and crook. They are willing to bend the law in order to get what they want. I think that is the major problem. The issue of power. People want power and they are determined to get it at all costs. So, that question of education, to say what we really need. Is it textbook education or the education of life skills or education about governance for us to know? (C21).

…most people who engage in violence, they are people who do not have anything to do in life. But if someone is employed and goes to work they cannot afford to spend the night at a political gathering or toy-toying in the streets, this is not possible. The people who engage in political violence are people who do not have anything to do in life. These are people who do not have anything to such an extent that someone will just come and buy them beer and say to them "right, guys, I would like you to go and do 1, 2, 3 things (C7).

I can say we have witnessed violence, like in 2008 we know there was land reform, isn't it? It was done towards and it continued during election time. From Zanu (PF)'s point of view it was, can I say it was done quickly, giving people land, the land and so on, that's their ideology. So Zanu (PF) supports, if they see someone trying to block that then they can go against that person. And from the MDC-T's point of view they perceived it as being biased, the land being given to Zanu (PF) supporters. So where there was land

being given the MDC could try to block it, and where there was land being given the Zanu (PF) could try to promote the land being given to people. MDC try to block it and so on. So I can basically say…Yeah, it may have been partly responsible. Then I have… right, in towns, I have also witnessed where the councils we know the councils were being run by the MDC trying to undermine or to repossess certain assets from especially blacks, can I say the black community, I heard where the cases where these councils, because of their ideology as well, to say these councils are now being independently run and they should be free and fair, so if someone owes the council some money that person can go to courts (C20).

I think is, it is media coverage. That's one cause. Now and the way it, I think it is at the core. Eh, media coverage. The way of media coverage is at the core. Now downstream, because they will be covering, say if it is a personality or a political organisation they will be covering it in terms of what it is going to provide to the people. Now in terms of what this organization or personality is going to provide for the people there tends to be competition for political posts, your power is also increased. Your access for opportunities is also increased. Isn't it? So the competition tends to heighten and to be harmful at times. To the extent that I always feel that if we were, we were to eh, eh adopt this culture where we would have our political leaders those vying for big political leadership, those vying for big political posts hauled before a panel of journalists like what happens in other nations so that they talk to the people, so that every citizen who has access to that coverage has an opportunity now to say I think I like what he said because there are more promises that what he said we would have very little of this (C18).

The way I see it, what causes political violence is that what is good for the goose is not good for the gander. Do you understand what I am saying? What I think is good you may say it is bad. So if you see me doing what you think is bad then it means you won't be happy which may result in us fighting. That is what I think causes election violence because if a person does not understand, let me say knowledge causes violence as well, ignorance because if a person is ignorant… (C6).

These statements illustrate that, unlike press discourses, citizen discourses attribute election violence to socio-cultural, political and economic factors rather than to a single cause, thus, demonstrating that the interface between press and citizen discourses on election violence is a zone in which the meaning of election violence is contested and negotiated.These contrasting versions of reality about election violence between the press and citizens hark back on the social construction of reality theory which underpins this thesis in that the meanings of election violence are not fixed by the press but shift continuously as determined by the mutual negotiation between the press and the readers (citizens) who bring to bear their own interpretive frameworks to the political communication process.

The alternative discursive constructions of electoral violence embedded in citizen discourses recall Stuart Hall's contention that meaning does not lie in an "object, person or idea or even the real world" (2013, 10) nor is it fixed or predetermined by the communicator, but is constructed through discourse rooted in symbolic practices and cultural conventions (Hall 2013, 11). This recalls assumptions about meaning being located in the domain of interpretation rather than in the encoding processes, whereby during "interpretations never produce a final moment of absolute truth" but are "always followed by other interpretations, in an endless chain" a cyclical chain of meaning production (Hall 2013, 27). Hall argues that:

> Any notion of a final meaning is always endlessly put off, deferred. Cultural studies of this interpretive kind, like other qualitative forms of sociological inquiry, are inevitably caught up in this 'circle of meaning (Hall 2013, 27).

Viewed through a discursive lens the press and citizen discourses on election violence examined in this thesis bring to the fore the possible divergent (and complementary) ways in which these discourses shape one another. As distinct discourses they produce knowledge about election violence in Zimbabwe, while at the same time imposing limits on the possible range of ways in which people can talk about election violence. In Foucauldian discursive parlance, the press and citizen representations of election violence in Zimbabwe establish the "epistemes" (or the state of knowledge at any one time) and ways of talking about election violence (Hall 2013, 29). Hall states that:

> The same discourse, characteristic of the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any time…will, appear across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society. However, whenever these discursive events 'refer to the same object, share the same style and…support a strategy…a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern…then they are said by Foucault to belong to the same discursive formation (Hall 2013, 29).

The competing versions of reality about election violence are solidified through antagonistic perspectives on the role of the press in reporting election violence.

While the press accentuated an objectivist journalistic frame (Chapter Five and Six) citizens prescriptions on the ideal role of the press in reporting election violence reflect an objectivist style of journalism, whereby the journalist is a "mere cypher" (Street 2001, 152), reporting on the goings on in the country in a dispassionate, "impersonal, dry, matter- of- fact" (Street 2001, 153) manner.

The interpretive journalistic style in the state-owned press was underpinned by the 'national interest' while in the privately-owned press it was pivoted on the watchdog function. Press discursive practices such as the deliberate masking of the identities of the perpetrators of election violence, demonization, moralising, humanistic rhetoric, hyperbole, sanitization and rationalization of election violence, selectivity, emotive language and the conspiracy of silence (discussed in Chapter Five), memorialisation, condemnation and advocacy for peace (discussed Chapter Six) debunk the myth that journalists merely observe events as they unfold.

Street (2001, 157) notes that "Journalism is necessarily selective and partial, but the selectivity and partiality are not the product of individual values and skills or professional codes". The interpretive journalist style reflected in press representation of election violence laid the basis for the press to promote evaluative and explanatory framing of election violence whereby negativity was the hallmark (Hanitzch et al, (2011) or as Djerf-Pierre (cited by Salgado and Stromback 2011, 146) puts it, journalists assumed "the role of Ombudsmen of the public" whereby the press became advocates for the "presumed interests of the needs of the public/audience" (Salgado and Stromback 2011, 146). The interpretive frames of the press were challenged by the objectivist frames in citizen discourses, whereby the role of the press in framing election violence was prescribed as that of simply "reporting the news" and "let the readers be the judge".

The objectivist function of the press reflected in citizen discourses on election violence is at odds with the interpretive journalistic style of the press and suggests that newspaper readers are able to pick up discrepancies between journalistic rhetoric, embellishments in professional codes and mission statements and actual practice. This shows that readers can construct discourses that counterbalance that of the press- a recall of the Foucauldian view that meanings are never fixed, but contested and "sometimes bitterly fought over" (Hall 2013, xxv).

As Hall argues there are always numerous circuits of meaning circulating in any culture at any one time from which the audience can draw meanings (Hall 2013, xxv). Viewed through an epistemic lens the press and citizens circulate competing meanings and values that set the boundaries on how election violence should or should not be communicated and why it should be communicated in a particular way.

The contention in this thesis is that, although, the press endorses particular ways of thinking and talking about election violence through their agenda-setting and framing practices the press's interpretation of reality does not always prevail.

Press discursive practices discussed in Chapter Five and Six, such as legitimation, de-legitimation, condemnation of perpetrators of election violence, accentuation of peace message and memorialisation is predicated on the assumption that election violence negatively impinges on the validity of electoral verdicts. Interpretive journalism invites discursive practices that seek to endorse or impugn electoral contests through discursive practices where information is infused with the opinions of the writer or news articles that proffer views "about motivations, tactics, and consequences of political events" (Esser and Umbricht 2014, 12) are instrumental in nature. Similarly, the objectivism reflected in citizen discourses produces a particular type of knowledge whereby journalists are preoccupied with reporting the truth "as it is" (Hanitzsch et al, (2011, 276) whereby one should be able to separate facts from opinion (Hanitzsch et al, (2011, 276).

A careful examination of citizen discourses on election violence are hinged on certain assumptions about the existence of an 'Absolute Truth' which finds an outlet through statements like "the media should give people a fair report"(C2), "reporting an event as it is" (C17), "media should report violence as violence" (C13), "impartiality and lack of balance can cause violence"(C6), "may be if they are to report facts as they are" (C3) and the belief that the press can be and should be 'neutral' and 'straightforward' (C5). These statements signal claims to a particular regime of truth that runs counter to interpretive discursive practices in the press, thus demonstrating the extent to which press and citizen discourses on election violence were divergent and constituted competing discursive formations imbued with contesting *epistemes*.

There were, however, instances in which citizen and press frames on election violence overlapped. This was particularly the case in relation to the organic instrumentality of election violence. As discussed in Chapter seven, citizens constructed election violence as "orchestrated", "planned", or "sponsored", the way the press constructed it as "organised" rather than spontaneous.

Among the citizens the discourse on orchestrated violence was anchored by words and phrases like "well planned", "planned", "orchestrated", "to achieve certain objectives" and "being influenced" as discussed in Chapter Seven, in the press, such as the "orchestrated" frame of election violence found resonance around the discourse of blame whereby the state-press blamed the opposition (MDC) "provoking violence", while the privately-owned press characterised election violence as "state terror" suggesting that election violence was pre-mediated rather than haphazard. Thus press and citizen discourses converge and intersect in relation to the organic nature of election violence.

A key frame on election violence that runs through press and citizen discourses on election violence was the notion of election violence being organised and purposeful (Sisk 2008) as well as the perception that it was 'orchestrated' rather than spontaneous or haphazard.

Based upon the contention that election violence was organized, the press employed particular discursive practices to expose election violence, with the state-owned press invoking the 'national interest' while the privately-owned press appealed to the 'watchdog' function in 'exposing' the ruling party and the state for orchestrating election violence. Citizens, however, framed election violence as organised, but blamed "all politicians" for spearheading election violence, although a few of them singled out particular political parties for blame. Thus citizen discourses frame election violence as being deeply implicated in the systemic, structural and everyday political practices and values of Zimbabwean society rather than a phenomenon linked to particular individuals. The true value of incorporating citizen discourses as part of the political communication system is that citizen versions of reality about election violence undercut those of the press thereby stretching to the limit the press's claims to the truth (Hobbs 2008, 11).

Hall (cited by Hobbs 2008, 12) succinctly demonstrates the limits of the press's claims to truth when he notes that:

> It is discourse, not the subject who speaks it, which produces knowledge. Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the *episteme*, the *discursive formation*, the *regime of truth*, of a particular period or culture… the 'subject' is *produced* within discourse. The subject of discourse cannot be outside discourse, because it must be *subjected* to discourses. It must submit to its rules and conventions, to its dispositions of power/knowledge. The subject can become the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourse produces. It can become the object through which power is relayed. But it cannot stand outside power/knowledge as its source and author.

Citizen discourses thus intersect with press discourses while at the same time acting as a countervailing force to the press's versions of reality by marking the boundaries to their 'truth' claims and power.

Waldahl (2004, 102) notes how the "pro-opposition press" in Zimbabwe viewed politically motivated violence during the 2000 elections as "both systematic and organised". Waldahl further notes that, according to these newspapers "the violence was being organised by circles close to the government and under its control. This took many forms".

Similarly, the vernacular media in Kenya have been accused of orchestrating election violence in the aftermath of the 2007 elections through the deployment of tribal discursive frames (Cosmos, 2013, Ismail and Dean 2008) a scenario reminiscent of the "Rwanda Model" , (Onyebadi and Oyedeji 2012) discussed in Chapter One and Two. In the context of this thesis citizens confirmed that due to their anti-democratic discursive practices on election violence the press engendered a culture of political intolerance.

Sisk (2008, 13), notes how a significant amount of election violence is "not accidental or spontaneous" but "purposeful", meaning that violence, including election violence is intrumentaluised, organised and mobilized rather than haphazard. Although press and citizen discourses differ on the perpetrators there is agreement that election violence is mobilised and instrumentalised to gain or retain power, even if the real perpetrators may lack agency.

Consequently, the identification of perpetrators of election violence in both the press and citizen discourses is a highly contested discursive practice which follows the rivulets chalked by political polarization.

Merilainen (2012, 5) argues that "elections can also trigger random or spontaneous acts of violence among various stakeholders, particularly during the post-election violence phase" but is quick to acknowledge that random violence follows a different logic than organised electoral violence. She further notes that "politicians do not always have full control over the perpetrators of political violence…even when they operate under the direct payroll of the politicians. Sometimes things get out of the politicians' hands and escalate" (2012, 6).

The organised nature of election violence underscores how election violence is instrumentalised for the accessing or retaining power, and the challenge faced by the press in exposing the complex but hidden networks of patronage connecting the perpetrators of election violence and their benefactors.

Apart from the orchestration frame both citizens and the press constructed election violence as intertwined with the history of the nation. In the case of the state-owned press the historicisation was actualised through references to how the violent character of the liberation struggle shaped political attitudes and behaviour in the country and how those attitudes crystallised into an exclusive and alienating narratives of violence such as, the Gukurahundi strategy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011), "patriotic history" (Ranger 2004) and "patriotic journalism" (Ranger 2005). The historicisation trope also found an outlet through discursive strategies such as "memorialisation" (discussed in Chapter Six), a deliberate attempt to retrieve past memories of election violence for hegemonic purposes.

In relation to citizen discourses historicity is articulated through tropes of historical continuity, whereby election violence is constructed as a residual consequence of the nation's liberation ethos and political culture. In this sense election violence is constructed as inevitable, meaning that it is conceived within the broader framework of societal values, attitudes and practices which manifest themselves beyond a singular electoral episode.

As a discursive device, historicisation constructs election violence as seamless connected within the broader societal questions and tensions rather than as a side-product of the democratisation process (Merilainen 2012). This echoes some scholars like Sisk (2008) and Merilainen (2012) who argue that in fragile societies, underlying political and socio-economic tensions and rivalries dating back to the colonial period have been responsible for the outbreak of violence during election time. Kenya is an example of a country where deep-seated "ethnic rivalries, and land disputes" (Merilainen 2012, 78) are said to have contributed to the outbreak of post-election violence in 2007. For Merilainen this "serves as an example of how unresolved social/ethnic grievances may catalyse a violent reaction towards electoral malpractices" Merilainen (2012, 78).

Press and citizen discourses on election violence also reflect the nexus between election violence and the unfinished historical question of land in Zimbabwe. As discussed in Chapter Five, some of the election violence during the 2000 parliamentary and 2002 presidential elections relates to the land issue, thus demonstrating how election violence is intricately intertwined with broader societal questions in fragile societies.

Some of the news headlines make reference to the violent confrontation between war veterans and white commercial farmers, 'shootings', 'murders', or 'killings' during farm invasions (discussed in Chapter Five), an indication that land struggles were inseparable from political struggles. In fact, the land issue has been described as the epicentre of Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political crisis, particularly after the introduction of the 'fast-track' land reform, also known as *The Third Chimurenga* or *Jambanja* (violence) (Chari, 2010; Chari 2014). References to the land reform and its violence-inducing character in press and citizen discourses validate that election violence is intricately interwoven in Zimbabwe's political struggles.

Press and citizen framings of election violence reflect the intersection between local politics and global processes. For instance, the press justified certain framings of election violence (e.g. sensationalism and hyperbole) on the basis that there was a need to alert the international community about the human rights situation in Zimbabwe, implying that Zimbabwean elections (local events) were put on the global spotlight by the press, with the assumption that the international community could intervene if the need arose.

This underscores the instrumentality of supranational institutions in resolving local conflicts – a counterpoint to the national interest (sovereignty) discourse flagged by the state-owned press. On the one hand, the privately-owned press rationalises the deployment of hyperbole on the grounds of "sounding the siren" on the perpetrators of election violence as a way of soliciting the military intervention of the West- a point that has been elaborated on in Chapter Six. On the other hand, the state-owned press accuses the privately-owned press of contriving or stage-managing election violence in order to gain sympathy from its "Western sponsors", thereby underscoring the fact that the discursive construction of election violence was conditioned by a nexus of the forces of globalisation and localisation (Zimbabwean nationalism). The global angle was underpinned by what Wolfsfeld (1992, 1) refers to "unequal political conflicts", defined as "a public confrontation between a government and at least one other antagonist in which the state… has significantly superior amount of coercive resources at its disposal", thereby creating an alibi for intervening in a domestic conflict.

8.4 The Consequences of Discourse

The language which the press uses to describe election violence has consequences in so far as it affects citizens' perceptions about the scale of election violence, who is the perpetrator of the violence, who are the victims and why election violence is used. This is because the language used by the press to communicate such "facts" "interferes with the reader's process of finally deciding what is true and what is false" (Hall 2006, 167).

The power of the press lies in the fact that it produces certain knowledge or truth claims about what is being communicated and the person communicating the message. Hall (2006, 173) contends that discourse "produces knowledge that shapes perceptions and practice. It is part of the way power operates. Therefore, it has consequences for both those who employ it and those who are" subjected to it…" (Hall 2006, 173).

Through their 'framing practices' (Hobbs 2008) the press engendered certain ways of thinking and talking about election violence among the citizens.

For instance, press discursive devices like exaggerations, bias, concealment of facts, lack of follow-ups, sensationalism, and partisanship fostered ignorance among the citizens as they glossed over the reality of election violence during elections forcing citizens to buy more than one newspaper or read online newspapers in order to get a complete picture of the situation.

Reading more than one newspaper, reading news online and 'alternative' sources for news and information on elections was the clearest testimony of the existence of competing regimes of truth in the press. The fact that citizens viewed the press as fostering ignorance rather than enlightenment was an indictment on the press's inability to execute its informational and educational mandate, and the loss of citizen trust was not only an indictment on the press's anti-democratic practices.

While exaggerations, sensationalism and blowing events out of proportion created the impression that election violence was ubiquitous, 'cover-ups', suppression of stories and omissions blurred citizens' perceptions about election violence at a particular time.

The idea of an informed and active citizenry is one of the "most basic (and desirable) elements of a well-functioning democratic society (Blanco 2011, 178), and rests on the supposition that an informed citizenry is able to participate in the governance process. Citing Carpini and Keeter, Garcia-Blanco (2011, 178) argues that, "this conception of citizenship rests on the assumption that citizens need to be satisfactorily informed if they have to engage in politics, as a central resource for democratic participation is political information".

When the information disseminated by the press is no longer credible it means that the press perpetuates false perceptions about the reality, resulting in inappropriate actions and behaviour, a scenario that Edelman, in his book, *The Politics of Misinformation,* (2001, 112) refers to as "obstacles to change and occasions of error". This clearly shows that the press, particularly in fragile societies, and being marked by socio-political cleavages, does not always promote democratic values and can become an agent of anti-democratic tendencies.

Nyamnjoh (2005, 2) acknowledges this shortfall as much when he argues that, although the mass media have the potential to inform and educate society they can also be "a vehicle for uncritical assumptions, beliefs, stereotypes, ideologies and orthodoxies that blunt critical awareness and make participatory democratisation difficult".

Nyamnjoh attributes the shortcomings of the press to "journalistic excesses" and unprofessional journalism compounded by the press's misconceptions of liberal democracy, whereby democracy is conceived purely in political terms or as a "struggle between those with a nation's interests at heart and those who merely want to satisfy their narrow interests", the upshot of which is that journalism is narrowly viewed as "an exercise in turning a blind eye to the shortcomings of political allies, while exaggerating the weaknesses of the paper's political opponents" (Nyamnjoh 2005, 185-186). Nyamnjoh adds that:

> Depending on what side of the political spectrum a paper finds itself on, truth derives either from the opposition or from the government. There is little respect for evidence, honesty, fairness, balance or neutrality…Such partisan journalism is little informed by the professional canons of honesty, accuracy and fairness. The ability of politicised or partisan journalism to give all sides of the story, to avoid biased language, comment and opinion in news stories and reports, to dwell on the issues and avoid *ad hominem* remarks, has been crippled by the tendency to break Cameroonians down into the 'righteous' and the 'wicked' depending on whether they are in opposition or in government… (Nyamnjoh 2005, 186).

The argument advanced in this thesis is that partisanship alone is not a sufficient explanation of the press's shortfalls. There is a need to pay more attention to the whole gamut of political values and practices embedded in press texts and their toxic effects on the citizens' psyche, particularly their potential to foster anti-democratic tendencies such as intolerance. The contention here is that anti-democratic practices are a consequence of the triadic interaction between the press, politicians and the citizens - the three main components of a society's political communication system.

It is imperative to look beyond the ethical consequences of partisan representations of election violence and begin to engage with the political consequences of unprofessional reporting on the citizens, particularly its demobilising effects.

The numerous misgivings expressed by citizens about the press's inability to execute its informational mandate - a critical task of the press envisaged in the public sphere concept, demonstrates that citizenship emerges from a discursive interaction between media audiences/readers and media output (Dahlgren and Sparks 1991, 17). A press that distorts reality, polarises society or fosters ignorance engenders negative citizenship in the sense that it is a breeding ground for "incivility" (Mutz 2006, 6), intolerance, dishonest and chicanery.

Some of the anti-democratic effects of press discourses on citizens were manifested through citizen disengagement from political issues. These anti-democratic practices were crystallized by the grammar of fear, trauma, social and political alienation, self-censorship, a culture of silence, resignation to fate and divinity and discursive closure. As discussed in Chapter Seven, these negative sentiments were attributed to the way in which the press represented election violence. This shows that discourse has social and political consequences and as observed by Street (2001, 80) media "content matters only because it has an effect".

The demobilising effects of press discourses on citizens undermine democracy because they bias the electoral terrain. Furthermore, political cynicism interferes with the citizens' ability to participate freely in electoral processes, to enact their citizenship and "to make political judgments and act upon them" (Street 2001, 80) thereby undermining the democratic process. However, a cautionary note in relation to the demobilising effects is in order.

It must be pointed out that the effects of press discourses on the citizens were not always straightforward in that some demobilisation discourses were juxtaposed with mobilisation discourses. As much as disenchantment engendered by the anti-democratic practices mentioned above entrenched polarisation and 'cognitive dissonance', it also motivated some people to vote in a particular way in protest against propaganda. Further, others were goaded to search for alternative sources of information in order to fortify their political views towards certain political parties and in the process became hardened. Thus, citizens constructed multiple complex (and multiple) meanings when they interacted with press discourses on election violence. This shows that the way in which citizens interacted with press content on election violence was dynamic.

What is instructive to note is that the question of citizen agency is brought to the fore in political communication, particularly the vocalisation of citizens in primary rather than secondary roles and as constructors of reality and privileged political actors rather than constructed subjects (Garcia-Blanco 2011).

8.5 Rethinking the Democratic Role of the Press: Understanding Election Violence through the Political Culture Framework

Press discourses on election violence discussed in Chapter Five and Six demonstrate the limits of liberal ideas in relation to the role of the media and democratization (Norris 2004). The activist journalism model (underpinned by competing narratives on election violence i.e. 'national interest' and 'watchdog' function) constrains the press from executing its informational and public sphere role through the deployment of anti-democratic discursive practices which leave citizens less informed about election violence.

The high level of cynicism about and the loss of trust in the press and the emerging citizen newspaper consumption practices (such as triangulation of news sources and resorting to alternative sources of information such as new media; discussed in Chapter Seven) is an indictment on the limits of the press in influencing the democratic agenda.

Discursive practices such as exaggeration, hyperbole, selective reporting and salience, partisanship, cover-ups, and a conspiracy of silence on election violence attest to the failure by the press to live up to the dictates of the liberal democratic mandate and its watchdog function.

Norris (2004, 116) contends that freedom of the press and media access are necessary for democratisation, but are not sufficient in themselves in the sense that "if the press is subservient to established interests, uncritical of government failures, and unable to hold the powerful to account for their actions" the development of society is stunted.

Norris (2004, 118) adds that:

> If the channels of communication reflect the social and cultural diversity within each society, in a fair and impartial balance, then multiple interests and multiple voices are heard in public deliberation. This role is particularly important in political campaigns.

The activist model of journalism adopted by the state-owned and the privately-owned press is at odds with democratisation in the sense that, as hostages of political forces, they produce competing versions of reality about election violence. As much as election violence renders democracy meaningless, political information which is a product of a "manufactured artifice" (McNair 1995, 23) compromises democracy. The anti-democratic discursive practices in the press (discussed in Chapter Five and Six) constitute a "major flaw in democratic theory" (McNair 1995, 23). In the specific context of this thesis, this flaw manifests itself through discursive practices that diminish the efficacy of the press in the democratic process. This diminished efficacy of the press finds expression through discourses of political disengagement, apathy, mistrust of politics and politicians, and cynicism, what Baudrillard (cited in McNair 1995, 22) refers to as an "intelligible strategy of resistance to bourgeois attempts to incorporate the masses into a 'game' which they can never really win. Beyond the general shortfalls of the liberal democratic role of the media one can discern the rather palpable tenstion between citizen expectations of the media which are couched in a liberal democratic flavor and a critique of the same. This normative tension might be a result of the fact that citizens derive the language with which to evaluate the media from what the media say in their editorial charters and other claism by journalists. In other words, citizens use the media's own proclamations and statements of intention to hold to account the press, and more often than not there is a disjuncture in what the media set out to do and what they actually do, or at least what the citizens believe the media are doing. However, this normative tension between what citizens expect the media to do and what the media do could be a separate topic for investigation.

McNair (1995, 24) contends that the liberal democratic role of the press is in conflict with journalistic practices like deceit, propaganda, concealment or suppression of convenient information from citizens in the sense that citizens will be exposed to unreliable information or a "manufactured artifice rather than the objective truth".

He adds that "only those with a touching and naïve faith in the ethical purity of politicians would deny that" manipulation plays an increasingly important role in contemporary democratic politics. Against this backdrop, the role of the press in democratic politics, not least in reporting elections is not unproblematic.

Theoretical debates about the role of the press in politics, particularly, in relation to the less powerful developing countries of the global South have not made much headway. An attempt to superimpose the liberal democratic model which was developed for the powerful democracies of the West has not yielded useful theoretical insights.

The contention in this thesis is that work on theory building in relation to the role of the press in democracy could be broadened by generating scholarly data on the norms, values, beliefs and practices through which politics is performed. An understanding of the role of the press in democracy could be enhanced by turning attention to the concept of political culture and political communication culture by paying attention to the interactions between different components of the political communication process. There is a need to gain insights on the values, norms and practices which inform discourses on election violence. Democracy is a culture, and only a press that is sufficiently predisposed to a democratic culture can promote democracy. An anti-democratic press cannot advance democracy no matter how much democratic rhetoric it propagates. Nyamnjoh is correct in his contention that the predicament faced by the media in relation to their democratic role has been their emphasis on "the need for more domesticated understandings of democracy as mediated by the quest for conviviality between individual and community interests" (Nyamnjoh 2005, 3).

Nyamnjoh's contention that the media can also be a "vehicle for uncritical assumptions, beliefs, stereotypes, ideologies and orthodoxies that blunt critical awareness and make participatory democratisation difficult" is plausible. Attempts to replicate theoretical templates designed for powerful Western nations in explaining the situation in Africa is a futile exercise.

Nyamnjoh's observation on the mismatch between liberal democratic theory and African experience is so apt. He states that:

> Implementing democracy in Africa has been like trying to force onto the body of a full-figured person, rich in all the cultural indicators of health with which Africans are familiar, a dress made to fit the slim, de-fleshed Hollywood consumer model of a Barbie-doll entertainment icon. But instead of blaming the tiny dress or its designer, tradition has been to fault the popular body or the popular ideal of beauty, for emphasizing too much bulk, for parading the wrong sizes, for just not being the right thing. Not often is the experience and expertise of the designer or dressmaker questioned, nor his/her audacity in assuming that the parochial cultural palates that inform his/her peculiar sense of beauty should play God in the lives of regions and cultures where different criteria of beauty and good life obtain. This insensitivity is akin to the behaviour of a Lilliputian undertaker who would rather trim a corpse than expand his coffin to accommodate a man-mountain, or a carpenter whose only tool is a huge hammer and to whom every problem is a nail. The history of implementing liberal democracy in Africa attests to this clash of values and attempts to ignore African cultural realities that might well have enriched and domesticated liberal democracy towards greater relevance (1995, 23).

The search for appropriate theories to guide the understanding of the role of the media in Africa must begin with the generation of data on the experiences of African countries in relation to the role played by the press in the democratic process. Data on the press and citizen discourses on election violence can help shed light on the role of the press in democracy. Election violence is, therefore, deeply implicated in every day discursive practices, in communication practices, and in the way in which people relate to one another during mundane aspects of life. In other words, election violence is intricately intertwined in broader societal culture and practices and the press is deeply implicated in the formation of this culture through its discursive practices which can either nature democratic or anti-democratic tendencies.

The press, therefore, can be a key institution in transforming an anti-democratic culture into a democratic one through the deployment of discursive practices that do not engender hatred, intolerance, arrogance, blind loyalty, partisanship and other anti-democratic practices that may make politicians and citizens speak past each other. It must be underscored that the findings in this study neither endorse the notion that the press fuels election violence, nor the belief that it is a moral witness for peace and stability.

The press can engender anti-democratic attitudes among citizens through its discursive practices that may undermine the entrenchment of a democratic culture. This thesis, foregrounds political culture and political communication culture as conceptual frameworks for gaining insights on the interaction between actors in the political communication process. This research agenda is supported by Pfetsch (2004, 346) who notes that "…the interaction space at the interface between politics and the media in which political communication actors move is crucial in understanding the representation of political objects in national public arenas".

The term political culture was introduced by Almond and Verba in 1963 (Pfetsch, 2004, 347) and referred to the "interplay between subjective orientations of citizens", meaning the ideas and values that impinge of citizens' political actions and behaviour. Almond and Verba (cited in Pfetsch 2004, 347) state that:

> When we speak of the political culture of a society, we refer to the political system as internalised in the cognitions, feelings, and evaluations of its population…The political culture of a nation is the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation.

Due to the fact of political culture being widely shared and distributed within a population it is likely to be stable over time and can be passed on from one generation to another. On the other hand, political communication is a subset of political culture and evolved in the 1970s (Pfestch, 2004, Gurevitch and Blumler 2004). Thus, political culture constitutes a framework within which different forms of political communication such as the encoding and reception of political messages and "vocabularies" of politics take place (Gurevitch and Blumler 2004, 335-336). According to Paletz and Lipinsiki (1994, 2) political culture "consists of widely shared, fundamental beliefs that have political consequences" and "shapes how individuals and society act and react politically". According to Paletz and Lipinsiki (1994, 3) "the actual and potential role of the media in shaping a political culture is thus self-evident." The media transmit political culture from one generation to another. They diffuse values, attitudes and thoughts, through society in ways that render some of them to be "widely shared". Since ideas and beliefs are of key importance in political culture the press becomes a critical tool for the dissemination and entrenchment of political democratic and anti-democratic cultures.

Thus “ideas that go to make up political culture are not innocuous, they have political consequences” (Paletz and Lipinsiki (1994, 2). Pfetch (2004, 363) argues that “the concept of political communication culture as a component in the overall political culture of a country can make an important explanatory contribution to analyzing the interaction between politics and the media in modern democracies”. Floss (2008, 4) argues that a nation’s political culture is shaped by the character of its institutions and their practices, be it a consensus orientation, personalisation orientation or conflict orientation. The way in which news frames issues can also determine a country’s political communication culture as well.

A close examination of press and citizen discourses on election violence enables one to gain insights on the way the values and beliefs that underpin the encoding and decoding of political messages and the panoply of political vocabularies which permeate political communication in Zimbabwe. The chapter argues that the way in which the press frames news on election violence accentuates the conflict frames which crystalliseed through anti-democratic discursive practices. This conflict orientation engenders negative attitudes in politics which find expression through apathy, cynicism and outright disengagement from political processes. Such discursive practices play host to anti-democratic practices like intolerance, undermining of a positive civic culture are antithetical to the deepening of a democratic culture.

The differences and similarities between press and citizen discourses on election violence are summarized in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1: Comparing and contrasting press and citizen discourses on election violence

DIFFERENCES	
Press Discourses	Citizen Discourses
• *Conceive election violence narrowly* • *Privileges covert or physical election violence.* • *Physical violence conceived as disconnected from symbolic violence.* • *Election violence viewed through a simplistic lens.* • *Views election violence through a binary lens* • *Attribute election violence to personality traits.* • *Employ episodic frames* • *Employ interpretive frames* • *Pro-involvement in reporting*	• *Conceive election violence broadly.* • *Focuses on both physical and covert election violence.* • *Conceive election violence as intertwined with symbolic violence.* • *Election violence viewed as a complex phenomenon.* • *Election violence through multiple lenses.* • *Election violence viewed as embedded in culture and every day practices.* • *Employ analytical frames* • *Emphasises detachment in reporting*
SIMILARITIES	
• *Both view election violence as organised* • *Both view perpetrators of election violence as lacking agency* • *Election violence viewed as an instrument for gaining or retaining power* • *Election violence historicised*	

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter compares press and citizen discourses on election violence using three themes (conceptions of election violence, framing of election violence and the effects of press discourses on citizens) as a lens for gaining insights on the interaction between the press and citizens. The chapter argues that, although press and citizen discourses show some overlap they also have significant differences.

Unlike press discourses which narrowly conceive election violence as physical violence, citizen discourses conceive election violence through a wider lens encompassing imprints of mediated reality, lived experiences and interpersonal experiences, thereby demonstrating the intersection of election violence with the broader societal violence. Unlike the press, citizens construct election violence as seamless and intersecting with other forms of election violence in society. Furthermore, citizen and press framing of election violence demonstrated the currency of competing regimes of truth, whereby the press projects election violence in binary terms while citizens construct it through its complexities, foregrounding its nexus with history, society, the economy and politics. However, both press and citizen discourses framed election violence as "orchestrated", although they differed in their attribution of agency. These competing frames also found expression through equally antagonistic discourses actualised through the prism of an interpretive journalistic model and an objectivist journalism model.

These divergent frames recall the competing regimes of truth circulated in the press and citizen discourses about the nature, cause and effects of election violence in Zimbabwe during presidential and parliamentary elections held between 2000 and 2013. Interactions between press and citizen discourses also manifested themselves through contradictory effects of press discourses on the citizens.

The anti-democratic discursive practices in the press engendered contradictory reflexes among the citizens. While exaggerations, suppression of facts, hyperbole, sensationalism and other anti-democratic discursive practices in the press engendered negative civic cultures such as political disengagement it was also observed that they galvanized citizens to protest against the status quo and to expose themselves to alternative (and palatable) sources of information. Thus, press discourses engendered both mobilisation and demobilisation behaviour.

The chapter concludes by pointing out that the data gleaned from analysing the interface between press and citizen discourses can be valuable for mapping out the values, beliefs and practices which inform how politics is performed in a particular society. Such data can be valuable for charting a new paradigmatic path in relation to the role of the press in democracy in societies in transition.

The contention in this thesis is that the ideas circulated by the press have political consequences and can shed light on the political culture and political communication culture of a society. Political culture can be a powerful explanatory tool for gaining insights into how attitudes, values, beliefs and actions can unwittingly lay bare citizens and the press's commitment to democratization.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

9.1 Introduction

This study used a Foucauldian discursive analytic approach to map out press and citizen discursive constructions of election violence during Zimbabwe's presidential and parliamentary elections held between 2000 and 2013, the ultimate objective being to broaden knowledge on the role of the press in election violence. A discursive analytical approach provided a conceptual lens to view election violence through a social construction lens.

The thesis was limited to examining the quality of representation rather than the quantity or volume of coverage over a period of thirteen (13) years. The discursive analysis entailed an examination of a corpus of archival textual data from five national newspapers, (namely *The Herald, The Sunday Mail, The Zimbabwe Independent, Daily News, Newsday* and *The Financial Gazette*) semi-structured interviews with purposively selected journalists and editors from these newspapers as well as semi-structured interviews with 21 purposively sampled Zimbabwean citizens who are regular readers of newspapers. Press discourses were compared and contrasted with citizen discourses in order to gain insights on the normative values that underpin discursive constructions of election violence.

The study yielded insights that will expand knowledge on the role of the press in political conflicts in general and election violence in particular. The competing discursive constructions of election violence by the different newspapers bring to the fore the tension between theoretical perspectives that contend that reality is constructed by the media through discourse and framing and those that suggest that the media simply reflect on reality. Further, the study explored the interface between press and citizen discourses on election violence and demonstrated how citizen discourses act as counterpoints to press discourses on election violence.

This final chapter gives a reflective account of the key observations and findings of the thesis highlighting their implications for theory and journalism practice. The limitations of the study are discussed and avenues for further research are identified and recommended.

The argument advanced in this chapter is that the discursive construction of election violence in the state-owned and privately-owned press reflects competing versions of reality chalked by equally antagonistic political values. While the state-owned press prioritised 'national interest' and 'sovereignty' the privately-owned press projected election violence through a liberal 'human rights' framework. In the ensuing contestations, the meaning of election violence became a site for political struggles and its meaning became elastic, depending as it was, on who is the perpetrator or victim was or which newspaper was reporting and the political interests it represented represent. Further, the thesis argues that, although the press had the privilege to set the limit on the citizen's social knowledge, press discourses remained amenable to the oppositional readings of politically active members of the public who constructed parallel discourses about election violence based on their lived experiences and their interpretations of what was published in the newspapers.

9.2 Competing Regimes of 'Truth': Selectivity, Silence and Salience

As pointed out in this thesis, the discursive construction of election violence in the period under study (2000 – 2013) was characterised by antagonistic discourses whereby state-owned and privately-owned press projected competing versions of reality in relation to who the perpetrators and the victims or the levels of election violence were. The polarised political environment fed into simplistic and dichotomous constructions of election violence, and provided fertile ground for the opposing press camps to deploy discursive practices characterised by the "Wicked" and the "Saints", thereby sowing seeds of political intolerance in society. However, as demonstrated in Chapter Seven the citizens punctured holes into this binary narrative by producing hybrid discourses that bore imprints of mediation and their lived reality. The principal discursive tropes through which the press's binary narrative was pivoted were selectivity, silence, and sensationalism, and exaggerations.

The implication of such discursive practices was that election violence came to denote different things depending on who was speaking and the benchmarks of morality were pegged differently depending on who was the perpetrator or victim of election violence.

As the press had entered into pacts with their political allies to "see no evil, speak no evil and hear no evil" the representation of election violence became a terrain of ideological struggle.

The thesis argues that, although there is no evidence to support the view that the press fuel election violence similar to the Rwanda Model mentioned in Chapter Two, nevertheless, through its selectivity, conspiracy of silence and sensationalism and other anti-democratic framing practices, it promoted a culture of political intolerance which can exacerbate social and political tensions in society. Through discursive practices like selectivity, silence, salience, hyperbole, and exaggerations the press legitimises election violence. For instance, the persistent portrayal of the MDC as the perpetrator of election violence, as the perpetrator of political violence or as the "originator of violence" (discussed in Chapter 5) might or could have created an excuse for the ruling party to annihilate the opposition party in the sense that such discourses legitimise violence against the opposition since the opposition is framed as an enemy and eliminating the "enemy" becomes common cause. In the same vein, the "mystification" of election violence by the state-owned press, whereby the opposition MDC was constructed, not as the "real enemy", but a front for whites who had been defeated ("the invisible forces") it meant that violence against the MDC was portrayed as "legitimate" since the party was projected as a monstrous force, an allusion to Akpabio's "framing them in order to hang them" technique (Akpabio, 2011). Similarly gross exaggerations and hyperbolic representations of election violence and the stigmatization of ZANU (PF) by the privately-owned press might also have encouraged retaliatory violence by opposition supporters or as one respondent argued (see Chapter Seven) made ruling party supporters feel blackmailed and created an incentive to perpetrate more violence against political opponents.

Selectivity reporting of election violence, the conspiracy of silence, selective salience and exaggerations are not just unethical, but also anti-democratic news discursive practices which hinder the press from promoting accountability and transparency. In addition, the conspiracy of silence on violence by the press helps to normalise violence. The fact that the press was embedded in political party politics restrained it from reporting fully and objectively on what was transpiring on the ground.

Voltmer (2010, 137-138) alludes to this when she notes that the media "have been criticised for remaining too close to political power holders to be able to act as effective watchdogs; political reporting is regarded as too opinionated to provide balanced gate-keeping…".

As a result of their close proximity to political power holders the press in Zimbabwe became part and parcel of the architecture of electoral violence. The press became "*active participants in*" shaping public opinion and perceptions and were an integral component of the political process rather than "*reporting on and about*" (emphasis original) election violence (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995, 3).

As a consequence, the reporting of election violence became guided by political, rather than professional considerations and stories on election violence were carefully selected, "appropriately" placed and inflected, hyped or toned down, depending on who was the alleged perpetrator or victim. This gave rise to "activist journalism", whereby the press became active participants in political struggles, doing the bidding for particular political principals.

As alluded to above "activist journalism" thrives on anti-democratic discursive practices (see *Table* 9.1 below) which are at variance with the normative liberal democratic ideal role of the press such as its informative and educative role, because it is driven by a political rather than a public interest agenda. As Pippa Norris has observed, the media can only impact positively on democratisation and human development only if they are able to play their civic forum role, whereby they act as a public sphere, "facilitating informed debate about the major issues of the day…in a fair and impartial balance" (Norris 2004, 118) where diverse voices and interests are represented. Some scholars contend that, although the media can "help to build peace and national consensus", they can also hinder it if they become proxies for rival political groups, "in the process sowing divisiveness rather than consensus" and can "contribute to public cynicism and democratic decay" (Coronell n.d., 1).

To varying degrees, both the state-owned and the privately-owned press employed discursive practices that predisposed society to conflict rather than social consensus.

Such discursive strategies include "othering", mystification of the enemy, demonisation, the use of emotive language, personalisation and constructions that justified the annihilation of the "enemy other", such as the suggestion that Zanu (PF) was engaged in a perpetual mortal combat with invisible forces" and the construction of a false moral equivalence. The preponderance of a conflict frame in the representation of election violence in both state-owned and privately-owned press speaks volumes about a journalistic and political culture that is more oriented towards conflict rather than consensus, and the state of Zimbabwe's social and political fragility created an environment that was conducive for the entrenchment of such a political culture.

The contention in this thesis is that, more than being a constitutional issue, democracy is also a culture and a press that does not embody democratic values cannot foster democracy. Political culture here denotes, the "widely shared, fundamental beliefs that have political consequences…shapes how individuals and the society act and react politically" (Paletz and Lipsink (1994, 1). Thus political culture encompasses people's interactions, political preferences subjective orientations (Paletz and Lipsink (1994).

Floss and Marcinkowski (2008, 4) argue that "a nation's political culture is very much shaped by political institutions, their practices and rationalities". The press is one of these key institutions in society and the way it frames political issues can give an indication on whether it can foster consensus or conflict. This, however, is another topic which warrants a separate investigation. Suffice it to point out that the deployment of certain discursive tropes, such as selectivity could in the long term engender a political culture of intolerance that predisposes society towards conflict rather than consensus.

9.2.1 Interpretive Journalism or Journalistic Activism?

A key argument that runs throughout the analysis in this thesis and needs to be reiterated here is that the way in which Zimbabwean state-owned and privately-owned press discursively constructed election violence straddled the thin line between legitimate interpretive journalism and activist journalism. The term "activist journalism" used in this thesis was used by two media practitioners when they expressed misgivings about the way in which their colleagues had become embedded in political party politics (see Chapter Eight).

Although others did not use exactly the same term (with one journalist preferring to describe journalism of the day as "advocacy" (see Chapter Five) the notion that the press was enmeshed in political struggles and ideologies of the day also became a leitmotif in the interviews with citizens who mentioned political alignment as one of the major problems with the press. As a consequence, press representation of election violence brought to the fore the tensions between the normative prescriptions of the state (as educators, informers, public interest etc.) activist journalism. The implication of this was that discursive construction of election violence became a way of allocating values, thereby spotlighting the potency of the press as a distributor of power (Street 2001, 232).

The discursive power of the press was mobilised through the provision of particular interpretive frameworks and discursive practices that shaped public opinion about the reality of election violence. The interpretive style ensured that reality was shaped in a particular way through selective agenda-setting and fostering certain interpretative frameworks. Nash's contention resonates with one key argument made in this thesis thus:

> Knowledge as discourse is not knowledge of the "real" world as it exists prior to that knowledge. Although it presents itself as representing objective reality, in fact, discourses construct and make "real" the objects of knowledge they "represent" (cited in Street 2001, 233).

Although the ideological function is an inherent asset of the press, the way in which the press became embedded in political causes during elections that are the focus of this thesis went beyond the thresholds of bias expected in society, be they democratic, semi-democratic or authoritarian, giving credence to the argument that the press resembled political activists.

As argued in this thesis such activism manifested itself through their selective reporting, distortions, sensationalism, partisan, and dichotomised reporting characterised by the existence of "Devils" and "Angels". As argued in Chapter 7 such partisanship did not just result in loss of public trust towards the press, but also seeded "moods of bitterness" (Mlambo 2005, 15) among bitter rival political party supporters who felt blackmailed by the press. While the immediate effect of such acts cannot be quantified, that such actions have the potential to nurture a political intolerance and a culture that orients society towards conflict rather than consensus in the long-run cannot be ruled out.

9.2.2 National Interest versus Liberal Human Rights: A Conflict of Values?

The competing versions of reality about election violence observed in this thesis were pivoted on diametrically opposed ideological values which found expression in the state press's 'national interest' the privately-owned press's liberal human rights discourse (vocalised as "the watchdog" role). As observed in the thesis the liberal human rights frame was vocalized through discursive practices that border on hyperbolic statements and apocalyptic prophecies (such as the claim in the *Financial Gazette* that the situation in Zimbabwe would degenerate into a genocide) (discussed in Chapter Five), excessive deployment of humanistic rhetoric in relation to the "worthy victims" (Herman and Chomsky 1988) of election violence, who almost always happened to be opposition supporters. On the one hand, the 'watchdog journalism' concept authorised particular discursive practices and behaviour among the privately-owned press such as sensationalism in order to attract the international community to intervene through invocation of the responsibility to protect doctrine. On the other hand the 'national interest' discourse legitimised the suppression of incidents of election violence, a culture of denial, sanitization and rationalisation of election violence in the state-owned press, meaning that the citizen was deprived of adequate information about the situation regarding election violence. At the same it became impossible for readers to have an understanding of the level of political violence if they relied on the press since it was either portrayed as increasing (in the privately-owned press) or decreasing (in the state-owned press).

The press became indirect accomplices in the election violence through its impartial reporting, selective sourcing and selective application of moral standards. It was also demonstrated in this thesis how the selective use of sources became a discursive strategy to activate either the 'national interest' or the 'watchdog' argument.

Whereas the state-owned press relied mainly on the police as sources, the privately-owned press relied on opposition politicians, human rights organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), thus making it very clear that they were pursuing separate ideological agendas. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, two of the reporters that were interviewed (one from the state-owned press and the other from the privately-owned press) admitted that these sources

were not always reliable since they also were aligned to political parties, and in the case of the NGOs, they also wanted to advance their own political agendas.

In the final analysis, the terms "national interest" and "watchdog journalism" became facades to protect partisan political interests rather than protecting the broader interests of the citizens as their meanings became infinitely elastic. For instance, "national interest" could be interpreted to mean the legitimate state monopoly of violence which was in the public interest, but could also mean state directed violence against civilians who did not necessarily threaten state security interests. Similarly, the watchdog journalism discourse could be interpreted as legitimate surveillance of powerful interests and protection of innocent civilians, but could also mean giving a free rein by the privately-owned state to fabricate stories and make false allegations against the ruling party (such as the Tadyanemhandu case referred to in Chapter Seven) knowing full well that such allegations could gain traction with the 'international community'. Given the elasticity of these concepts the only point of convergence between the state-owned press and the privately-owned press was "activist journalism" whereby either side of the spectrum became a mouthpiece of their chosen political party. It is this "activist journalism" model which defined the discursive construction of election violence in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2013, although one must hasten to mention that the degree to which it was practised by either side is debatable and fell outside the purview of this thesis.

9.2.3 The Instrumental Logic of Election Violence: Legitimation and De-legitimation

Consistent with their diametrically opposed ideological values, discursive constructions of election violence were expressed through an instrumental logic whereby the press sought either to certify or de-legitimise the electoral verdict. In this vein, and as was demonstrated in the thesis, the state-owned press accentuated messages about the "peacefulness" of elections, while the privately-owned press condemned every electoral verdict whether the election was peaceful or not.

Against this backdrop both the state-owned and the privately-owned press deployed an interpretive news framework through which the press projected a particular political party was not electable because it used violence or to trash the verdict in advance on the grounds that violence had been used. It was observed in this thesis how the press deployed "memorialisation"

(reporting on residual or historical violence in the context of a current election) as a discursive strategy to keep memories of a violent past alive so as to influence voting behaviour. The implications were that election violence was re-inscribed with a new and wider frame of meaning which transcended immediate physical skirmishes to encompass subliminal effects of election violence.

In the privately-owned press, elections became synonymous with remembering the "horrendous" events of previous elections, while in the state-owned press the focus was on atrocities of the colonial regime and the injustices of the past. The excavation of past electoral violence was more associated with the privately-owned press, particularly in relation to the 2013 harmonised elections, probably because there was negligible physical violence during this election. Infusing election violence with a wider frame of meaning that locates violence outside its normal conception as well as outside the electoral cycle meant that election violence could not be reduced to the counting of dead bodies in a particular electoral context, as it also included elements of trauma, pain, and memory. The implication was that physical electoral violence, within the immediate electoral cycle was viewed as being synonymous with its residual effects. This has methodological and sampling implications for the scholarship on election violence, particularly in fragile societies characterised by deep-seated historical tensions.

The question becomes, what is electoral violence and what is not; where do you draw the line; how do you determine an electoral cycle? How do you separate election violence from other types of violence? These are hard questions which require hard answers and deserve a separate investigation. Be that as it may, it could be argued that, the fact that there is an intrinsic relationship between election violence and other political conflicts, the relationship between election violence and the press is more complex than previous studies might have assumed.

What is instructive to note is that, as a discursive strategy, memorialisation of election violence is a salutary example of the discretionary powers of the press and its ability to foster particular definitions and knowledge or impose hierarchies on phenomena.

Such discretionary power was demonstrated through the selective conscription of sources in the condemnation of election violence, with the privately-owned press going for institutional voices such as the church and the NGO community and election monitoring groups (an expression of its moral and human rights standpoint) to lend moral weight to their political agenda.

As demonstrated in this thesis, the condemnation of election violence was almost always followed by blame giving credence to the Foucauldian view that all discourse has consequences. It would not have been enough for the press to blame perpetrators of election violence without prescribing what or insinuating what action should be taken.

In the case of the privately-owned press, condemnation of election violence was always followed by the conclusion that the elections would not be free and fair because of the violence, thereby opening a debate about what exactly constitutes a free and fair election. For instance, it has been observed that in South Africa's inaugural democratic elections in 1994 more than 1000 people died in clashes between the African National Congress (ANC) and its arch-rival, Inkatha Freedom Party, but were declared free and fair (Chapter Four). The question that arises is whether the freeness and fairness or there lack of elections should be tied to a death toll? Does the prevalence of peace (and absence of violence) mean elections are free and fair?

In this thesis it was demonstrated how the press adopted a simplistic view whereby the legitimacy of electoral verdicts was tied to the absence of election violence. The state-owned press accentuated the ruling party's peace message while the privately-owned press ignored it on the pre-text ruling party politicians had, in the past been inconsistent in their call for peace. As discursive strategies, condemnation, peace advocacy message and endorsement of electoral verdicts illustrate the extent to which the state-owned and the privately-owned press pursued tangential ideological agendas. This brings to the fore the instrumental logic of election violence, whereby election violence became a tool for gaining or retaining power.

9.3 Citizen Discourses and their Interface with the Press

9.3.1 Discourses

In Chapter Seven, it was argued that, although press and citizen discourses differ significantly, there are points of convergence. Whereas the press foregrounded physical violence, citizens constructed election violence as cross-cutting, encompassing physical, psychological and symbolic elements of election violence, meaning their framing went beyond physical or observable violence, what Reif (2011, 6) refers to as "noisy" forms of coercion, to include "quiet" covert forms of election violence.

The wider frame of election violence in citizen discourses is also reflected in the characterisation of election violence as irrational, senseless, or a "spirit", connoting something that "suffers from conceptual devaluation or semantic entropy" (Schlesinger 1991, 5). While citizen discourses on election violence show conceptual depth and breadth press discourses define election violence narrowly, possibly because covert violence lacks the key ingredients of newsworthiness, namely visibility, drama, and measurable impact (such as death toll, number of injured etc.).

As noted in Chapter Two, one of the reasons why election violence has been given less academic attention is that, unlike wars, and other crises, it generally has a lower death toll.[46] By incorporating citizen discourses about election violence this study is able to broaden knowledge on the meaning of election violence, particularly from the point of view of those who experience it. Their constructions of election violence bear imprints of their lived reality as well as the mediated reality since they interact with the media.

[46] This possibly explains the phenomenal attention by both the media and academics to the Kenyan 2007/2008 post-election violence where about 1300 Kenyans died and about 500 000 displaced (Munyua, n.d.)

It was instructive to note that, among the main causes of election violence which dominated both press citizen discourses was the issue of unhealthy electoral competition, or "the desire for power", "hunger for power" what Mueller (2011, 99) referred to as "dying to win", which is symptomatic of societies characterised by high levels of patronage (Sisk 2008).

Mueller (2011, 109) notes that much of the election violence in Kenya emanated from the refusal by politicians to lose elections and their "willingness to use violence to win". As demonstrated in this thesis, citizens do not just attribute election violence to the desire for power, but also made reference to residual historical national questions, such as the land issue, the liberation struggle and the debilitating and polarising effects of economic sanctions imposed by the West (see Chapter Seven). This historicisation of election violence is significant and is acknowledged by some Zimbabwean scholars who note how the ruling ZANU (PF) party constructed ideologies of violence as an alibi to annihilate its opponents (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011).

It could be argued that, apart from engendering a siege mentality based on victimhood, colonial violence nurtured a culture of entitlement which found expression in the use of violence against opponents, giving way to a cycle of violence whereby the victim became the victimiser. Given the cyclical nature of violence, whether the current crop of politicians in the "democratic movement", whose claim for heroism is built on the foundation of "defiance" of autocracy, will not replicate similar tendencies of entitlement and violent tendencies in a post-Zanu (PF) era is debatable. However, the picture does not look so promising, particularly considering the violent fracturing of the opposition MDC, which has been characterised acrimonious intra-party skirmishes, some of which are well-documented by Lloyd Sachikonye in his book *When a State Turns on Its Citizens: Institutionalized Violence and Political Culture (*2011) are anything to go by. Suffice to reiterate that violence is vicious cycle and a culture acquired through socialization and social learning is a key element of the socialization process.

Both citizens and the press constructed election violence as "organised" or "orchestrated" rather than haphazard, and perpetrators of election violence were often constructed as lacking agency in the sense they were viewed to be sponsored by their principals who are politicians, an allusion to the instrumental logic of election violence in a context of state fragility.

However, citizen narratives contradicted the private press's constructions of election violence as widespread, attributing it to a few "Bad Apples" discursive frame underpinned by essentialist discourses and positive stereotyping, implying that whatever violence was being committed it was the work of very few misguided individuals.

As was observed in Chapter seven, citizen assessment of how the press reported on election violence yielded fruitful insights with all the respondents being in agreement that the press was polarised resulting in selective and partial reporting of election violence, thus confirming the existence of competing versions of reality about election violence discussed above. Citizens mainly attributed the partisan reportage of election violence to the existence of different "political agendas" and they pointed explained how theses partisan agendas were an impediment in getting a clear picture of what was happening in the country. Among a host of accusations against the press were anti-democratic practices such as, exaggerations, cover-ups, sensationalism, and selectivity, which motivated citizens to seek alternative means of information such as online and social media.

This chapter argues that anti-democratic journalistic practices exhibited by the press in its representation of election violence are anathema to rooting of a civic culture because citizens become ignorant of their civic duties (Voltmer 2010). As evidenced by the citizen narratives in Chapter Seven, the implications are these anti-democratic practices promote apathy, cynicism, fear, mistrust, suspicion and intolerance in society. It was observed in this thesis how, particular styles of framing election violence induced fear among the citizens and this militated against democratic right to participate in public affairs.

It is also worth noting, how fear triggered contradictory reflexes such as pain, talking, silence, political disengagement, engagement or new modes of communicating about politics. It was demonstrated that certain perceptions about the press either fostered passivity or goaded people to affirm their political affiliations, meaning that in some instances the press produced ambivalent reflexes. Thus contrary to the view that the press can promote political disengagement it may promote oppositional tendencies among people who are determined to see political change. To this extent findings in this thesis do not show a straightforward relationship between press discourses on election violence and citizen political behaviour.

In fact, the representation of election violence in the press elicits different forms of engagement in politics, some subtle, others not so subtle.

But it is worth underscoring that the scale tilted more towards a demobilisation effect than political engagement. However, these findings challenge the uncritical view associated with the Rwanda model whereby the media tend to be blamed for having caused violence during the Rwanda-Burundi genocide of 1994 (see also Onyapedi and Ojedeyi 2011).

9.3.2 Evolving Citizenship

The findings of this study revealed that partisan press discourses on election violence spawned new ways of engaging with the press by the news readers, in content in the context of intensifying political polarisation. It was observed that, in order to circumvent the problem of unbalanced news readers resorted to a form of "news triangulation", which entailed reading more than one newspaper at any one time and consulting "alternative" sources of news (such as social media, and other online sources) in order to get a balanced and complete view of what was happening in the country. There are several implications arising from this. The first is that the polarised political environment and partisan press reporting forced news readers to be vigilant against possible propaganda in the newspapers, forcing them to become more critical. This process marked the transformation from passive consumers of news to critical citizens, the basis upon which the term "citizen" is preferred in this study. The assumption is that readers who actively engage in the search for information on political issues are more than mere news readers or audiences who are of academic interest to marketers they have political agency. Compared to citizenship which implies active participation in political issues, "readers" and "audience" connote passivity and the way in which respondents in this study actively looked for information is a demonstration that they had transited from being mere readers to citizens. Their scepticism about what they read in the newspapers as illustrated in the discourses is indicative of the active citizenship canvassed in this thesis. The second implication relates to citizens' search for alternative news, particularly on social media which speaks to the limits of the normative liberal democratic model.

Norris alludes to this when she states that:

> Despite liberal ideals, in practice channels of communication can and often do fail to strengthen democracy, for many reasons. Limitations on the role of the press include explicit attempts at government propaganda; official censorship; legal restrictions on freedom of expression and publication- like stringent libel laws and official secrets acts; partisan bias in campaign coverage; oligopolies in commercial ownership; and more subtle unfairness in the balance of interests and those whose voices are commonly heard in the public sphere… (Norris 2004, 120).

While the causes of the press's failure to execute its democratic mandate are debatable, and are outside the scope of this study, their impact on citizens portends fascinating dynamics about the potency of new communication technologies as possible game-changers in political communication in the future, again a topic that warrants a separate investigation. It is, however, worth noting that the gap between what the press ought to do and what it actually does during elections has spawned "a parallel market of information" (Moyo 2010, 53) whose full manifestations and impact on the democratic polity are yet to be grasped.

9.3.3 Election Violence: The Ideal Role of the Press

It was noted in this thesis that citizen discourses on election violence went beyond an expression of misgivings about the way the press was reporting on election violence, but produced rich insights on what citizens perceived to be the pitfalls of the press in reporting election violence. This data could contribute towards crafting a template on reporting political conflict in general and election violence in particular (see Table 9.1 below). It was noted in the thesis that when talking about the limitations of the press in reporting election violence, they accentuated a litany of ethical shortfalls linked to the interpretive journalistic style discussed above. It needs to be reiterated here that, citizen suggestions on the ideal role of the press in reporting election violence went beyond rehashing normative journalistic ethics such as fairness and balance since reporting election violence is considered a "special beat" requiring unique skills and sensitivity to context.

According to citizens, one of the cardinal requirements in reporting election violence is "evidence based" reporting, whereby the press are required to include concrete evidence about incidences of election violence, be it audio-visual material or whatever could authenticate a story beyond doubt. This is an indication of increasing reader cynicism about interpretative journalism whereby journalists tend to infuse their own opinions with information as opposed to objectivist journalism whereby facts which is primarily fact-based (Esser and Umbritch 2014; Fink and Schudson 2013).

Esser and Umbritch (2014) note that Western newspapers have experienced a substantial change from the hard news paradigm to interpretive journalism style which is more geared towards answering the WHY question as opposed to the WHAT. Given that citizens perceive interpretive journalism as being less credible because of its judgemental and explanatory approach they advocated for an "Objectivist" reporting which is based on hard facts. It was clear from the findings that citizens are in favour of journalism of detachment and against any form of advocacy reporting during elections.

At the same time they recommended some approaches that could improve the reporting of election violence such as follow-ups. These recommendations are manifestations of citizen dissatisfaction with existing journalism styles which have made journalism less credible and consequently less efficacious in reporting political conflicts. The objectivist journalism approach canvassed by the citizens is an antidote to the "activist journalism" model discussed. Table 9.1 below compares the activist journalism model and the ideal "objectivist" model canvassed by the citizens.

Table 9.1: The Activist Journalism Model and the Objectivist Model Compared

Activist Journalism Model	***Objectivist Journalism Model***
Extreme attachment to political causes	Detachment from political causes
Selective coverage	Balanced coverage
Opinionated reportage	Fact-based reporting
Journalists embedded in political parties	Independent journalism
Highly interpretive	Objective
Belligerence tone	Peace-building
Extreme partisanship	Non-partisan
Speculative reporting	Factual Reporting
Cover-ups	Highly transparent
No evidence/manufactured evidence	Evidence based reporting
Episodic	Follow-ups
Exaggerations/sensational	Neutral
Party loyalism	Professionalism
Rumour mongering	Shuns rumour
Single source/no source at all	Multiple-sourcing
Inflammatory	indifference
Demonisation	
Personalisation	

As shown in Table 9.1 above, the activist journalism and the objectivist journalism models are polar opposites. The activist model represents what members of the public felt was the obtaining situation during election time, while the objectivist journalism model constitutes the normative ideal in reporting election violence. The essential difference between the "activist journalism" and 'objectivist model' is that the in the former, journalists lack independence while in the latter they are independent of political forces.

It is imperative to emphasize that these models are conceived from the perspective of the public rather than the journalists themselves, since the idea was to give agency to citizens as a key component of the political communication process. It is worth noting that the objectivist model of journalism contradicts the social constructionist approach adopted in this thesis in the sense that it presumes the existence of 'pure' reality out there.

This thesis makes three important contributions to the body of knowledge of media and elections. Firstly, the discursive analytic approach canvassed in this thesis provides a solid foundation for understanding the myriad of ways in which the media are implicated in the distribution of power (Street 2001, 232) and how this power is brought to bear during political power contestations. Through their discursive practices the media circulate knowledge and meanings about phenomena and those meanings may acquire a hegemonic status by shaping perceptions and actions.

Since a discursive approach to understanding election violence entails scrutinizing text, talk and social practices to reveal a particular account of reality, it provides a linkage with studies on political culture and political communication culture which have been previously studied from a framing perspective. Such an approach brings the study of media and politics into the realm of socialization, whereby media practitioners are viewed as products of a particular society with shared cultural values. It is these cultural values that should inform the practice of journalism. Paying particular attention to journalistic practices as cultural practices enables scholars to pay attention to those elements of journalistic practices that can predispose a society to conflict.

Such practices are not only found in news framing practice, but are also traceable to everyday interactions, practices and communication practices.

Secondly, incorporating the audience/citizens into the political communication equation brings one closer to understanding the political communication process as a system comprising of different elements (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). As noted in Chapter One, Blumler and Gurevitch (1995, 4) rightly observe that there has been a tendency in political communication to "under- or over-emphasize any single element of the political communication system". The consequence of this has been that very little is known about the interactive processes between the elements of the political communications. This study makes a modest contribution to a holistic understanding of political communication process as a system comprising of different elements.

Thirdly, the thesis contributes to the existing body of literature on media and election violence, which, as noted in Chapter One is an understudied field of study. As argued in this thesis empirical studies on the relationship between the media and election violence remain inconclusive and the findings in this thesis could open pathways for more investigation using different methodological and theoretical approaches.

The modest observations made here could contribute towards building a template on political/conflict reporting in contexts best by historical, socio-economic and political cleavages so as to promote journalism that is more sensitive to contexts as opposed to the dominant journalistic approaches which are based on 'universalism'.

9.4 Limitations and Areas for Further Research

The qualitative nature of this study meant that it refrained from making any inferences on the connection between the level of political violence and the volume of coverage over the period under study. Hence, it remains unknown whether the level of newspaper coverage can have an impact on the level of election violence. Only six printed newspapers were selected for this study, meaning that online newspapers, which, by virtue of their subterranean environment are not constrained by the restrictive press laws in the country and have a much more robust journalistic style, were not included in this study.

This means that the opportunity for comparing newspapers operating under different legal regimes was missed. A further limitation was that some newspapers, notably, the Daily News (and to some extent, Newsday) were not consistently published throughout the period under consideration (see Chapter One) and this meant that there was not comparable textual data from these newspapers since they did not report on some elections. As a result, their discursive constructions of certain elections could not be determined. In order to compensate for this gap, more privately-owned newspapers were included into the sample. The fact that the primary goal of the study was to map out the quality of reportage and not the quantity also meant that the lack of consistency in publication by such newspapers did not impact on the overall findings of the study that much. Another drawback was that the broadcasting media, which is largely in the hands of the government, and has played a crucial role in the country's political struggles, was also not part of the study.

Notwithstanding the endeavour to broaden the political communication system by factoring in the audience in the system, politicians, who are an integral component of the political communication system, were not included as this could have widened the scope of the study beyond manageable limits in terms of focus, time and cost.

Future studies could explore the relationship between media coverage and levels of election violence in order to ascertain the relationship between media coverage and election violence. There is also scope for a more systematic exploration on whether certain journalistic cultural and news framing practices pre-dispose certain societies to election violence. This is crucial for mapping out early warning signs for potential political conflict. Such studies may include cross-cultural studies exploring the link between journalistic practices and their impact on election violence.

9.5 Recommendations

Previous studies on media and politics have tended to over-emphasize the importance of political economy and news production imperatives while ignoring cultural practices and values that underpin the practice of journalism in different contexts. Ownership and control cannot be discounted in the political matrix and media owners will always seek to shape the editorial agenda. This thesis recommends that the Zimbabwean press should find shared cultural, professional and ethical values so that they are able to hedge themselves against pressures from political parties, although, admittedly such pressures cannot be completely eliminated.

The instrumentalisation of the journalism profession in Zimbabwe partly emanates from the lack of an integrative cultural and ethical ethos that could act as a buffer against political pressures. In the context of the economic crisis, the impact of economic factors cannot be discounted, but then a solid ethical and professional culture could help to alleviate these pressures. A unifying ethical code whose values are widely shared by all journalists could help foster a common identity among in the journalism profession which in turn would help reduce tendencies of 'othering' on the basis of the media house that one works for, which is what is happening at the moment, as indicated in Chapter Five.

The reason why politics takes primacy is that politicians put a wedge between journalists who are supposed to be united but are divided along political lines as well as along ideological, professional values, level of education, and self-perceptions. The lack of common socialization background means the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) the body that represents journalists lacks a voice, both in terms of labour and professional issues. Its membership is voluntary, meaning that journalists can choose to be bound by its ethical code or not and yet they continue operating in the same environment. The thesis is however cognisant of the fact that socialization is a long term process and does not start in the newsroom but in the lecturer room (if not at home).

For a very long time the journalism curricula in Zimbabwe have been fragmented and not based on any common values that bind the profession. The study recommends that in order to bridge differences between journalists, entry into journalism should be based on qualifications, so that journalists have a common understanding of their democratic mandate.

The lack of a common qualification and professional socialisation has meant that each individual journalist is left to their own devices as there is no common code which brings journalists under one banner the way lawyers or doctors do. Nyamnjoh proffers a very persuasive argument in this regard.

He posits that:

> To talk of a profession is to talk of people who distinguish themselves through their training and competence to practise a given trade. A profession is like a club: with its members, its by-laws, its values, its attitudes and ideals. It is going to admit or retain as members only those prepared to respect its vision of things, and its approach. Those whose values are different or whose attitudes do not conform will be excluded. One cannot talk of a profession where anyone can so what he likes how he likes (Nyamnjoh 1996, 54-55).

Although Nyamnjoh was writing in specific reference to the Cameroonian context, his statement has got a much wider application.

The thesis recommends that in order to address the corrosive effects politics manifested through activist journalism the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, the body which represents journalists in the country must have more robust programmes that engender a common identity among journalists. The argument that ownership constrains journalists from acting ethically is only acceptable to a certain degree, because it rests on the assumption that journalists do not have integrity to protect. The reason why journalism is encroaching on the border of political activism is not necessarily because of pressures from media owners, as was demonstrated in this thesis, but because they lack unifying professional and ethical values and a common perception as to what their role in society is.

Yet it is worth sounding a cautionary note here. Journalism is a product of society, meaning that journalism and society shape each other in a reciprocal relationship. The attitudes, values, beliefs and ideas held by journalists mirror those of society.

Given the very low levels of tolerance exhibited in public and private spaces such as online user-generated comments where people's identities are camouflaged it would appear that the values and attitudes and culture of reasoned deliberation envisaged in liberal democracy will take long to be rooted in fragile societies such as Zimbabwe and the activist journalism model exhibited during election time is just a symptom of this malaise. Certainly journalism cannot be ahead of its society.

9.6 Conclusion

This thesis has opened the debate on the ideal way in which the press should represent election violence and other political conflicts in fragile societies. Press and citizen discursive constructions of election violence was analysed from a Foucauldian discursive analytic approach. Press and citizen discourses on election violence were analysed from a social construction standpoint whereby they constitute regimes of truth or versions of reality that are subject to contestation. Thus media messages about election violence were treated as open-ended texts which can be interpreted anyhow. Thus the discretionary power of the press was challenged through citizen discursive constructions of election violence.

Although there is no evidence to suggest that the press in Zimbabwe caused election violence during elections held between 2000 and 2013, the discursive practices deployed by the press engendered social tensions and an intolerant political culture which could predispose society to conflict and "moods of bitterness" (Mlambo 2005).

Two competing journalism models were identified in relation to press discursive construction of election violence, namely the state-owned press' 'national' interest journalism model and the privately-owned press's human rights journalism model which found expression through the watchdog frame. Both models crystallised into an "activist journalism" model whereby the press were embedded in opposing political camps. As a consequence, the press exhibited a serious deficit in terms of ethical and professional conduct. The lack of a unifying ethical and political ethos among the journalists has created room for political parties to instrumentalise the press for political objectives. The thesis argues that the activist journalism model practised by sides of the press camp engendered political disengagement among citizens which found expression through cynicism and mistrust towards the press. This undermines the press's democratic role of engendering positive civic cultures.

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Interview with Mabasa Sasa, Acting Editor (*The Sunday Mail*), 14 May 2015, Harare.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.1

APPENDIX 1.1

Special Class

ld full crop
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IDC's Fidelis Mhashu (left) and Zanu (PF)'s Andy Mhlanga sit nomi. ation papers at Mashonganyika Building yesterday.

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also expected that the opposition vote will be heavily split in Harare South between Margaret Dongo of the Zimbabwe Union of Democrats and Gabriel Chaibva of the Movement for Democratic Change and Fisher Albert an independent. Vivian Mwashita will represent Zanu (PF).

A few of the Zanu (PF) candidates who lost in the primaries emerged yesterday to contest as independents. Among these are Clive Chimbi in Glen View, Moses Mvenge in Mutare North, Kindness Paradza in Makonde, Richard Shambambeva Nyandoro in Highfield and Lazarus Nyarayebani in Mutare South.

Cde Chenjerai Hunzvi confirmed yesterday that he becomes the party's candidate for Chikomba. He won the election, which was held in the constituency on Friday. MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai also switched constituencies from Buhera South to Buhera North, avoiding facing

• To Page 4

Opposition forces triggered political violence: Police

By Farai Dzirutwe

THE wave of political violence, which has gripped the country, was triggered by the aggressive approach used by Government opponents to campaign against the draft constitution and spilled over to the pre-election period as Government supporters reacted to the violence, police have said.

In a trend analysis released last week, police said violence had first surfaced in January when some opposition parties and anti-Government organisations, most notably the National Constitutional Assembly, used violence against the ruling party, the Government and its supporters during the campaign for the "no vote", resulting in Government supporters retaliating.

The violence escalated in February when liberation war veterans, angered by the rejection of the draft constitution, which had provisions for the acquisition of land, clashed with commercial farmers during land invasions.

Police spokesman, Inspector Bothwell Mugariri, said ugly scenes of political violence between the NCA and the Movement for Democratic Change on one hand and Zanu (PF) members on the other, took their root in the high density suburbs of Hatcliffe, Highfield, Chitungwiza, Glen View and Budiriro during the run up to the referendum.

"The police have, however, moved swiftly to arrest the culprits, who have committed crimes and managed to restore law and order to date," said Insp Mugariri, dismissing claims that the police were not taking action to control the violence.

Police maintained that a total of 19 people had since January 1 died in incidents linked to political violence, with only ten of those having been confirmed as having died in politically motivated attacks.

Three people had died during demonstrations on farm occupations, while the remaining six had died in incidents where the motives of the killings had not been conclusively established.

In a detailed report on politically motivated murders, police said MDC supporter, Edwin Gomo of Chitungwiza, was the first person to die in a politically motivated attack after he was struck on the head by a stone thrown by suspected Zanu (PF) supporters during clashes in Bindura on March 27.

The violence had erupted after MDC supporters provoked Zanu (PF) supporters by stoning the house of the district chairman in Chipadze high-density suburb. Five suspects were arrested in connection with this case.

The second victim, Doreen Marufu, whose political affiliation was not established died in Mvurwi when she was also hit by a stone during clashes between Zanu (PF) and MDC supporters.

Five Zanu (PF) youths and three MDC youths were arrested in connection with the murder of Ms Marufu, who was six months pregnant.

On April 15, MDC supporters organising a rally at Murambinda growth point, attacked a member of the

• To Page 4

Sunday Mail 4 June
Page 1 – 4

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in Chirumanzu and Runde districts.

The Government managed to build roads at a cost of about $20 million with the biggest project being the construction of Venge-Muvhamashava Road in Runde district at a cost of $7 193 000.

It plans to build some health centres, primary schools in Zvishavane, Kwekwe, Gweru, Chirumanzu, Gokwe South and North this year.

In the Matabeleland North province 51 RDC projects are set to cost over $50 million.

Matabeleland South Province received the highest number of schools with eight primary and five secondary schools being constructed in Gwanda, Insiza, Matobo, and Umzingwane districts.

The province, which over the years has been severely affected by water problems, saw the

Appendix 1.2

1.2 Sunday Mail 11 June 2000 P5

THE SUNDAY

NATIONAL NEWS

MDC perpetrates more violence on the ruling party

Sunday Mail Reporter

CONTRARY to allegations by Amnesty International that the ruling Zanu (PF) party was responsible for the violence that has marked the run-up to the June 24-25 parliamentary elections, statistics on incidents of political violence have shown that the Movement for Democratic Change has perpetrated more violence than Zanu (PF).

According to police records, political violence erupted as far back as February during the run up to the February Referendum on the draft constitution when the MDC/NCA alliance embarked on a violent campaign to disrupt report back meetings of the Constitutional Commission.

When the no vote carried the day the MDC/NCA alliance was buoyed into believing that Zanu(PF) was dead and buried. It was the MDC, which then organized its supporters in a well-calculated move to beat up Zanu(PF) supporters into submission.

While the just released Amnesty International report on the forthcoming elections chronicled in great detail incidents of violence perpetrated against members of the MDC, there were no reports of violence against members of the ruling Zanu (PF) party.

The following incidents of violence indicate that the MDC has not been an innocent bystander as the local independent Press and International Media would want the world to believe.

HARARE

On 6 February 2000, MDC youths attacked Zanu (PF) members who were gathered at the Party District Offices. Zanu (PF) property was damaged. Later on the same day, they attacked Zanu (PF) members who were holding a meeting at Cde Idah Mashonganyika's residence in the same suburb. Cde Mashonganyika's car and house were damaged during the attack.

On 11 March, 2000, about 200 MDC supporters beat up 100

Zanu (PF) supporters at Budiriro 1 Shopping Centre. As a result 60 Zanu(PF)supporters were seriously injured.

On 25 March 2000, Tendai Mutumbe, a Zanu(PF) member in Budiriro was severely assaulted by about 35 MDC youths for putting on a T-shirt written, "vote yes". The same youths went on to damage war veterans' leader Dr Chenjerai Hunzvi's surgery in the same suburb. These MDC youths also attacked excombatants who were drinking at Budiriro 4 Shopping Centre.

On 30 March 2000, MDC youths in the Porta Farm area disrupted a meeting of about 300 Zanu(PF) members. The he was severely assaulted before being taken and dumped at the Mabvuku-Mutare Road junction.

On 23 May 2000, Rhino Chanetsa; an MDC member was assaulted by three fellow MDC members for allegedly being a sell-out from Zanu (PF).

On 2 June 2000, MDC supporters attacked Zanu (PF) members residing at Shawasha Flats Block 5, Mbare in Harare. A petrol bomb was used in the attack. No injuries were reported but there was extensive damage to doors and windowpanes.

ELSEWHERE

On 28 March 2000, Sylvester Majekuza, the MDC Midlands North organising secretary and some whites, beat up Sebastian Tshuma, a war veteran and member of Zanu (PF). On the same day MDC members attacked ZNLWVA offices in Kwekwe and inflicted extensive damage.

In Chivhu, the MDC district chairman Patrick Chifamba armed MDC youths with brooms on 25 March 2000. The youths then attacked ZANU PF youths resulting in the arrest of MDC youths Farai Chisanga and Adam Dzvova.

In Banket, the MDC held a meeting at an open space near Banket Pool which was attended by about 1 000 people on 25 March 2000. After the meeting MDC youths went on a rampage, attacking four Zanu(PF) youths.

On 23 March 2000, MDC supporters teamed up with members of Golsec Security, went on the rampage in Karoi beating up war veterans.

In Bindura MDC supporters stoned John Chitewe's house and Zanu (PF) office in Chipadze on 27 March 2000.

In Zvishavane, MDC youths attacked Zanu(PF) youths that had gathered for a meeting at Chiedza Hall on 9 April 2000.

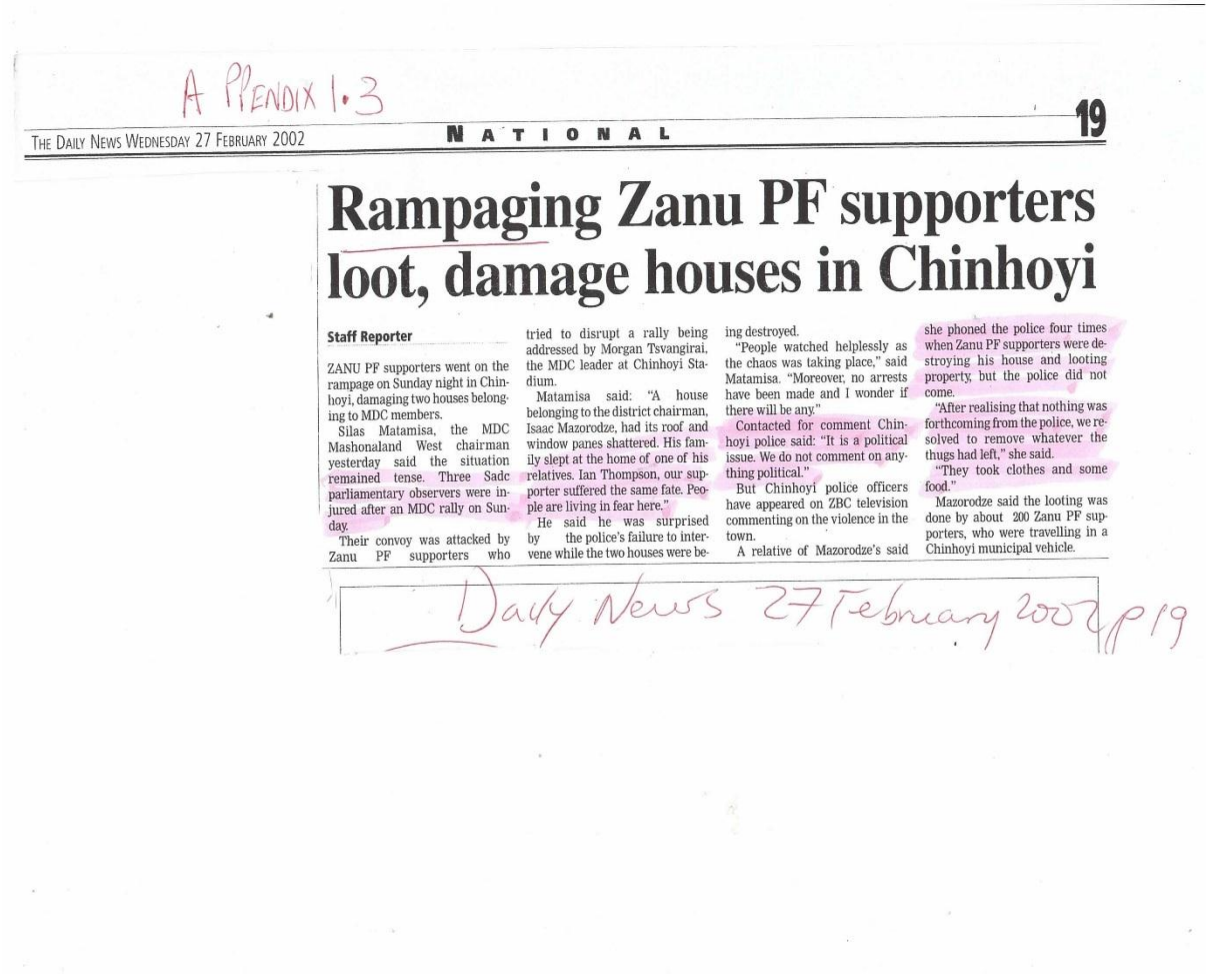
On 8 April 2000, about 2000 MDC youths led by Mazowe East Constituency candidate Shepherd Mushonga destroyed property estimated at Z$200 000. The property included Nzvimbo Council Guest house, Minister Chen Chimutengwende's Mazda T35 truck registration number 735-915 K and a Datsun 120 Y registration number 323-464 Q belonging to Aaron Kamundaya.

In Chihota, 150 MDC supporters attacked ZANU (PF) members at Chief Mudzimuirema's bottle store at Chiriseri Business Centre in Chihota on 2 April 2000.

In Matabeleland South, MDC member Jabulani Ngwenya assaulted Freedom Tshuma the Zanu(PF) Plumtree district chairman on 13 April 2000.

On 15 April 2000, MDC parliamentary candidate for Chikomba, John Chidyiwa assaulted Christopher Chibaba a ZANU

Appendix 1.3



APPENDIX 1.3

Rampaging Zanu PF supporters loot, damage houses in Chinhoyi

Staff Reporter

ZANU PF supporters went on the rampage on Sunday night in Chinhoyi, damaging two houses belonging to MDC members.

Silas Matamisa, the MDC Mashonaland West chairman yesterday said the situation remained tense. Three Sadc parliamentary observers were injured after an MDC rally on Sunday.

Their convoy was attacked by Zanu PF supporters who tried to disrupt a rally being addressed by Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC leader at Chinhoyi Stadium.

Matamisa said: "A house belonging to the district chairman, Isaac Mazorodze, had its roof and window panes shattered. His family slept at the home of one of his relatives. Ian Thompson, our supporter suffered the same fate. People are living in fear here."

He said he was surprised by the police's failure to intervene while the two houses were being destroyed.

"People watched helplessly as the chaos was taking place," said Matamisa. "Moreover, no arrests have been made and I wonder if there will be any."

Contacted for comment Chinhoyi police said: "It is a political issue. We do not comment on anything political."

But Chinhoyi police officers have appeared on ZBC television commenting on the violence in the town.

A relative of Mazorodze's said she phoned the police four times when Zanu PF supporters were destroying his house and looting property, but the police did not come.

"After realising that nothing was forthcoming from the police, we resolved to remove whatever the thugs had left," she said.

"They took clothes and some food."

Mazorodze said the looting was done by about 200 Zanu PF supporters, who were travelling in a Chinhoyi municipal vehicle.

Daily News 27 February 2002 p19

Appendix 1.4

The Financial Gazette, January 17-23 2002

The Financial Gazette

NATIONAL REPORT

Zimbabwe Decides: Election 2002

Villagers flee violence to the cities

By Maria Nyanyiwa
Staff Reporter

AT a crowded "safe house" provided by a good Samaritan in one of Harare's high-density suburbs, Rodney Chikura, an elderly man of 52, despairs.

"We have been condemned to a life of poverty," he says, throwing his arms into the air in desperation.

Like his 40 other colleagues with whom he and his family now share this four-roomed house, Chikura has had to watch helplessly the life he had built for himself and his family in the Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe (UMP) communal lands come down crashing under the violent wave of political violence engulfing Zimbabwe.

The unemployed father, who tilled the tired UMP soils to earn a living for his five children, says when ZANU PF mobs burnt his homestead last month because of his support for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), it was the second time that the ruling party's militants had done so in the past two years.

But this time round, said Chikura, he feared he might not be able to recover from the second attack and destruction of his homestead and his fields.

"The terror and torture methods that we thought had gone with Ian Smith have terribly become a reality in independent Zimbabwe again," Chikura lamented.

Smith, premier of the country then known as Rhodesia, was accused of presiding over the deaths of thousands of Zimbabwean blacks in his 15-year fight to maintain white supremacy, which ended with independence from Britain in 1980.

Two months ahead of a potentially history-drawing presidential election, militias loyal to President Robert Mugabe have unleashed unprecedented terror and violence across Zimbabwe, re-igniting in the minds of villagers such as Chikura memories of the terrible 1970s independence war.

Mugabe faces his deadliest political challenge in the critical ballot from MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai who many political analysts tip to make short work of Mugabe if the plebiscite is free and fair.

But for Chikura or for 60-year-old Amos Makwe, who fled his two wives and 10 children to come and join the growing list of internal refugees who are being looked after by the Zimbabwe Human Rights (ZimRights) organisation, the road to the important election is proving a terrible test of endurance.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Tawanda Nzira, an unidentified man, Tichaona Gwena and Trevor Zimunya waiting to see a social welfare officer at the MDC offices in Harare. — Pic by George Dzambwa

"Both my wives were forced to divorce me and one of them, who is seven months pregnant, was severely beaten up and is now being kept under surveillance," a tearful Makwe said.

The latest spasm of violence is a re-enactment of similar chaos which marred the run-up to the country's parliamentary elections in 2000, narrowly won by ZANU PF.

At least 40 MDC supporters were murdered before and during that ballot.

Makwe, who also is from UMP, one of the areas worst hit by the latest violence, claimed that the war veterans and ZANU PF militias had set up torture bases in his area where villagers suspected of supporting the MDC were routinely tortured.

Echoing the dejection and hopelessness of many of the refugees at the house, Makwe said he had lost hope of ever return-

To Page 8

Municipality of Kariba

Appendix 1.5

28 Feb 2003

Agency warns on genocide

Staff Reporter

THE US-based Genocide Watch group has warned that Zimbabwe could slide into genocide and called on Washington and the European Union (EU) to warn President Robert Mugabe they will back military intervention should pro-government militias and elements in Zimbabwe's army launch mass killings of the government's foes.

"The early warning signs for politicide (mass political killings) and possibly even genocide in Zimbabwe have now reached Stage Six," the Washington-based group said in its latest alert on Zimbabwe.

According to Genocide Watch's rating system, Stage Six is the final preparatory phase before mass murder is actually carried out.

Moves by Mugabe to shut Zimbabwe from being monitored by human rights groups, election monitors and the Press and a new public order law criminalising anyone who criticizses him were signs that in addition to election rigging he was possibly planning mass political or ethnical terror which he wanted to hide from outside scrutiny, it said.

Genocide Watch is part of the International Campaign to End Genocide (ICEG), which is a coalition of international organisations working on predicting, preventing, stopping and punishing genocide and other forms of mass murder.

Among the groups in the ICEG coalition is the Jerusalem-based Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, the Aegis Trust –Genocide Prevention Initiative based in Britain, the Belgian Prevention Genocides and Germany's Committee for an Effective International Criminal Law.

Mugabe's spokesman George Charamba could not be reached for comment

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Appendix 1.6

Jerera villagers fear repeat of murders if Zanu PF loses

Godfrey Mtimba
in ZAKA

"I STILL have strong memories of this day, June 3, 2008, when I woke up early in the morning from my village to Jerera Growth Point to book a better place on the mealie meal queue," recalls Mbuya Getrude Gweme, 68.

"On approaching the shops around 6am I saw people milling around one of the growth point's buildings and I rushed to get a glimpse of what had happened, only to have the shock of my life, a charred body lay outside because of political violence. We now wonder if the same situation will happen to us if Zanu PF loses elections," said Gweme.

The memories of June 3, 2008, are still fresh and linger in the brains and hearts of scores of Jerera villagers. They fear a repeat of heinous political murders if Zanu PF is trounced again in the coming make-or-break general polls slated for July 31.

Many are fearful of going to the ballot freely to chose their preferred parties and candidates, despite a relative peace in the run up to the elections.

Memory Pedzerai, a survivor of the June 3 arson attack, who was bundled into an unregistered Mitsubishi single cab truck that the gunmen were using on the fateful day and later dumped in a bush several kilometres from the growth point, said she was even scared to go to the polling station.

"As a survivor who has a first hand account of what happened on June 3, I don't think I will be able to go to the polling station," she told the *Daily News*.

"I am scared that if I cast my vote for the political party I prefer, lots of people will lose their lives again."

Although the campaign period is generally violence free, villagers say memories of the 2008 are still haunting them.

Clemence Chikovo of Chandipwisa Village in Ward 28 under chief Bota said the fear is still gripping many villagers. He said MDC supporters were fearful of wearing party regalia given to them.

"The memories are still fresh in our minds," Chikovo said.

He said because of the fear, many villagers could be forced to vote for a party which they do not like to avoid repercussions.

In June 2008, a wave of political violence hit Zaka, displacing several thousands of people and left many dead. But it was on June 3 when thousands were left shell shocked and frightened after men in anti-riot gear invaded an MDC district office at Jerera where displaced villagers had taken sanctuary.

Armed to the teeth with AK47 and FN assault riffles, the men broke into the office in the wee hours of the day as displaced supporters were in deep sleep.

The men ordered them to continue sleeping before sprinkling petrol on top of their blankets, bolting the door and setting them ablaze, killing two party activists, Chanson Mbano and Washington Nyamwe. Eight survived with serious burns that left three of them, Edison Gwenure, Kudakwashe Tsumele and Isaac Mbanje with deformed faces, hands and feet.

It is events of this day that has washed away any enthusiasm ahead of this poll.

"There is actually nothing exciting about this year's elections although they are critical," said Borand Matarutse from Makwevera Village in Ward 21.

Festus Dumbu, outgoing MDC legislator for Zaka West, who is seeking re-election, said his party was working flat out to flush out fear from villagers and convince them to vote for MDC.

"We know that some of our supporters and villagers have that fear, but we are telling them that there should not be afraid as nothing will happen to them if MDC wins elections and Zanu PF becomes history," Dumbu said.

"We are actually calling on them to vote for us to appease the blood that was shed by Zanu PF in 2008. We need to honour our lost heroes who died by fulfilling their dreams of a new Zimbabwe, hence MDC should be voted for by the same villagers."

MDC is preaching to villagers that the world is watching Zimbabwe, adding the regional bloc Sadc that facilitated the formation of the coalition government will be closely monitoring every development in this election.

"We are urging supporters to go out into their numbers to vote for MDC candidates including myself and our president Tsvangirai without fear," Dumbu said.

"This time we are going to rule the country and nothing will happen."

But for Mbuya Gweme, the memories of the 2008 have been too difficult to rub off and will affect how she votes on July 31.

Prime Minister's wife Elizabeth listens to a narration of June 2008 election horror from survivors Kudakwashe Tsumele, centre, and Edison Gwenure inside the office that was set ablaze.

Appendix 1.7

'2008 poll nightmare still haunts rural areas'

WONAI MASVINGISE
SENIOR REPORTER

MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai yesterday paid tribute to his party supporters in Mashonaland Central – a Zanu PF stronghold – for remaining resilient in the midst of adversity and admitted that an aura of fear still pervaded the province, five years after the bloody 2008 presidential run-off election.

Addressing a campaign rally in Rushinga, Tsvangirai said: "There is a strong element of fear among the people. My message is that fear has to be translated into hope of a new government and a new era. If you need hope, vote MDC so that we won't go back to the 2008 scenario," Tsvangirai said.

The MDC-T leader later toured Rushinga business centre where people raised various complaints, among them late payment for maize deliveries, low producer prices for cotton and bottlenecks in the voter registration exercise.

On voter registration, Tsvangirai accused his rivals Zanu PF of deliberately bungling the exercise to lock out first-time voters from registering fearing that they could vote for his party.

Later in the afternoon, Tsvangirai addressed another rally at Chipadze Stadium in Bindura where he said his government would redistribute land on a one-person-one farm basis and introduce mechanisms that promote productivity.

"There must be food security in this country, a country once described as a breadbasket, but now described as a basket case," Tsvangirai said.

"Our problem is that people are not farming. If you are farming, why should we remove you since you are a Zimbabwean? We must rationalise this programme so that we all benefit. It should be one-person one-farm."

He said the MDC-T did not just want to be in power, but had plans to restore Zimbabwe's economy by first addressing governance issues like the abuse of police power.

Tsvangirai also visited Mt Darwin and Madziwa.

Appendix 1.8

LOCAL NEWS

Fear of violence linger on in Mash Central: PM

ELIAS MAMBO

MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai says although intimidation and open political violence have declined, the fear factor is still lingering in the three Zanu PF strongholds of Mashonaland provinces.

The Mashonaland provinces have denied Tsvangirai victory in previous elections by overwhelmingly voting for Zanu PF. In an exclusive interview with the *Zimbabwe independent* on the sidelines of his campaign trail in Zanu PF's stronghold of Mashonaland Central, Tsvangirai said his supporters are still being intimidated and reminded of the horrors of the 2008 disputed elections that shook President Robert Mugabe's grip on power.

"Zanu PF is employing discreet methods of intimidation in an attempt to frustrate our supporters," said Tsvangirai.

"I have been around this province since morning but what I have seen are tactics to stop our supporters from attending our rallies so as to deny us victory in the forthcoming elections. But I am warning Zanu PF supporters that things have changed and since everyone wants change, we are going to win," he said.

Tsvangirai had to change his "walk past programme" at Guruve centre after his supporters were arrested.

"The president (Tsvangiriai) had to go and rescue about 40 supporters who had been arrested at Guruve centre for wearing party regalia and singing while waiting for his team to arrive," said Tsvangirai's spokesperson Luke Tamborinyoka.

At Mvurwi business centre, Tsvangirai could not address a scheduled rally at the stadium after Zanu PF supporters hastily organised ball games inside the venue to thwart the gathering. The rally was eventually held at an open space near Mvurwi vegetable market, some 300 metres away from the stadium with only seven police officers separating the rival party supporters. The same intimidation tactics were employed in Glendale where Zanu PF supporters encircled the stadium in which Tsvangirai was addressing supporters chanting party slogans.

Premier Morgan Tsvangirai addresses supporters in Bindura on Tuesday

Even though MDC-T had secured police clearance to hold the rally, Zanu PF supporters deliberately occupied the venue five hours before Tsvangirai was scheduled to address his supporters at midday, effectively blocking MDC-T supporters from assembling.

MDC-T supporters, who started trickling into the venue around 8am, were shocked to find two netball and three soccer teams of Zanu PF youths and women donning party regalia preparing to play matches inside.

"This is shocking because we have a police clearance to use the venue but Zanu PF decided to have ball games here forcing us to hold our rally at this open space," said MDC-T organising secretary Nelson Chamisa.

Tsvangirai has been telling his supporters at every rally in Mashonaland Central that voting for Zanu PF and Mugabe is setting the country backward.

"If you want progress then vote for MDC but if you want the economy to go back where it was in 2008 then vote for Zanu PF and Mugabe," he said.

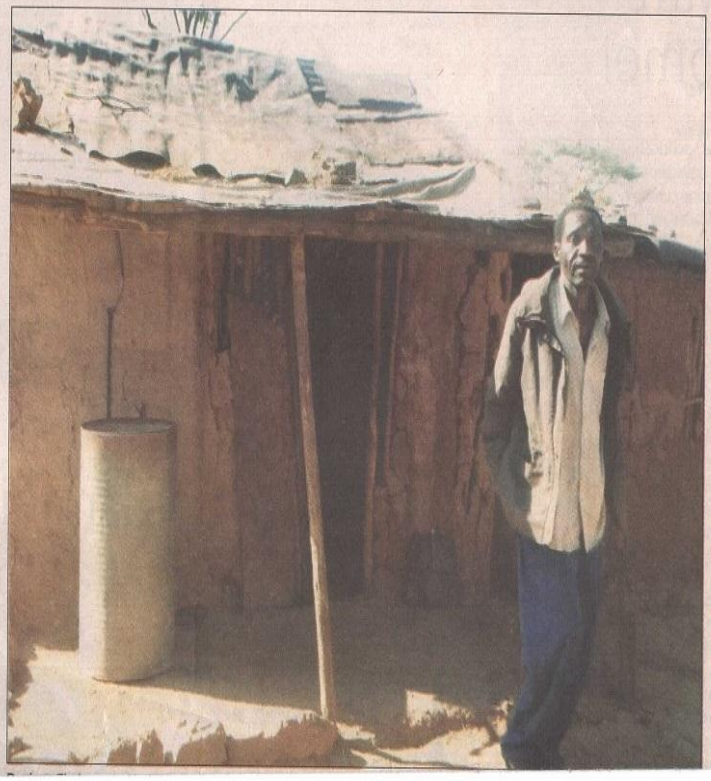
"What will Zanu PF do which they have failed to do in the past 33 years?"

Appendix 1.9

Murambatsvina victims' decade of nightmare, desolation

The majority of people in this desolate settlement have no jobs or any other source of income and most of them cannot send their children to school

BLESSED MHLANGA
STAFF REPORTER



FAMILIES displaced during the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order are still wallowing in poverty, without decent shelter eight years after government destroyed their homes.

The government-sponsored operation – which according to the United Nations displaced 700 000 families and brought untold suffering – was condemned by human rights organisations worldwide.

Some of these families now live at a squatter camp known as Plot B in Amaveni – also referred to as Chiundura B in Kwekwe's ward 10. More than 58 families with an

The residents said they at one time formed a committee which approached the then district administrator (DA), Tenpecent Mutikizizi, to ask for land which they could be relocated to, but their efforts yielded no fruit.

"This government is not sensitive to the people. Their interests are self-enrichment. Our efforts to have land allocated to us through the DA's office have fallen on deaf ears," said Philiomon Bhila, who was the chairman of the committee.

Councillor Aaron Gwalazimba said he was aware of the homeless people in his ward, but with council out of serviced stands and after disposing most of council-owned homes there was nothing council could do to help.

"This case needs government intervention because as a local authority we don't have resources to resettle 58 families. It is, however, sad that some people have four to five farms each and yet an entire community is homeless, without anywhere to call home," he said.

Residents of this squatter camp

Appendix 1.10

MEMORIALISATION pages
ZIMBABWE INDEPENDENT JULY 12 to 18 2013

APPENDIX 1.10 APPENDIX 1.10 1.10

Gukurahundi sore point in Matabeleland – Dube

HERBERT MOYO

ZANU PF central committee member and parliamentary candidate for Bulawayo's Makokoba constituency retired Colonel Tshinga Dube says his party's failure to effectively resolve long-standing concerns in Matabeleland, including the 1980s Gukurahundi massacres, remains a sore point for people in the region.

In an exclusive interview with the *Zimbabwe Independent* in Bulawayo last Saturday, Dube bemoaned failure to address the Gukurahundi and marginalisation protests saying he had warned his colleagues this would cost the party support in the elections.

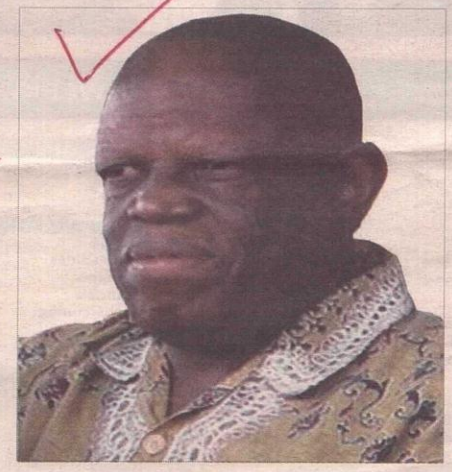
"I have said it over and over again that we have failed to address these issues (Gukurahundi and marginalisation)," said Dube. "A lot of unpleasant things happened here. Somebody who was not affected might just say it was a war while those who were affected will call it by a different name."

Dube said he had proposed that the National Organ on Healing and Reconciliation should work with chiefs from the region in organising rituals of reconciliation and "pardoning each other".

"We are not even touching the nerve centre of the problems. People may smile at you, but deep down they still retain a lot of hatred. Until we have that apology made, people will continue to harbour grievances."

The Zanu PF arm of government has repeatedly refused to entertain any public discussions and calls for compensation for victims of the conflict and killings which President Robert Mugabe described as a "moment of madness".

Mugabe recently blamed government forces for the murders, claiming they acted beyond their mandate.



Zanu PF aspiring MP for Makokoba Tshinga Dube

Government set up a commission of inquiry to look into the atrocities in Matabeleland headed by Justice Simplisius Chihambakwe in 1983, but the findings were never made public.

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) said that over 20 000 victims were killed during the conflict.

The CCJP report recommended a national reconciliation process; proper burial for the victims and compensation for those affected, as well as accelerated development for the affected regions.

However, Zanu PF is hesitating on these recommendations claiming the dark chapter ended at the stroke of the pens when Mugabe and the late Joshua Nkomo signed the Unity Accord in December 1987.

The Gukurahundi episode has, however continued to haunt Zanu PF in elections with the party only winning all seats in the Matabeleland provinces in 1990 and 1995 in the absence of any formidable opposition.

However, since the MDC came onto the political scene, Zanu PF has had nightmares in Matabeleland, failing to win any seat in Bulawayo since 2000 and getting a handful elsewhere in the volatile region.

Dube also suggested that his party's persistent liberation war rhetoric is not in sync with young people's aspirations as they are more concerned about getting an education, jobs and a decent life.

"History is a good subject for people to know where they came from, but I am not one of those people who want to make people live in the past," said Dube.

"Young people's aspirations are shaped by their present circumstances; so, it would be a mistake to pre-occupy them with the history of the liberation struggle which happened more than 30 years ago."

Dube, who lost the 2008 elections to MDC-T vice-president Thokozani Khupe, said he was confident of winning the Makokoba seat saying the MDC-T's "poor record of delivery in the coalition government had exposed its incompetence".

"In the past, Zanu PF would be blamed for all the problems as it was the sole governing party, but the MDC-T has had its own shortcomings which were exposed during the government of national unity where its ministries all fared badly," Dube said.

Appendix 1.11

Appendix 1.11 Daily News 4 March 2002 p 6

Abubakar has become an accomplice in violence

STATEMENTS by the head of the Commonwealth observer mission that some sections of the media are deliberately exaggerating the level of violence in the run-up to next weekend's presidential election are an insult to the memory of those who have died or have been injured in pre-election violence.

The statements are a blight on the reputation of the Commonwealth.

If certain sections of the media are highlighting the level of violence in this as in other elections, it is because they find violence repugnant and totally unacceptable.

The head of the Commonwealth observer mission to Zimbabwe, former Nigerian head of state, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, said at the weekend that some sections of the media were deliberately exaggerating the level of violence in the country.

More than 100 lives have been lost as a result of political violence since February 2000, while at least 35 schools in rural areas in one province – Masvingo – have been closed because of political violence associated with the presidential election.

Thousands of women and young girls have been raped, while families have been uprooted.

Abubakar and others are betraying the trust that the ordinary people of the world have in the outside world and international organisations coming to their rescue.

If the rest of the world behaved in the manner being exhibited by the Commonwealth and Namibian observer missions, Nigeria would not have returned to civilian rule, while Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe would not have become independent and democratic.

The families who have lost their breadwinners, parents and relatives to political violence blamed largely on the ruling party and supporters of the government, must recoil with revulsion upon listening to Africa's supposed elder statesmen belittling their tragic losses.

Is the Commonwealth, as it stands today, of any real value to the ordinary people if it so readily accommodates such excess of human rights abuses by those in power?

By showing their willingness to condone these abuses, they have become accomplices in the oppression of the ordinary people – the real victims of terror being unleashed by the rulers.

Of course, for Abubakar this is perfectly acceptable. But for someone associated with the Commonwealth, this is disgraceful.

The fundamental point here is that violence should and must never be a feature of any election.

It is curious that Abubakar should accept violence in an African election and suggests debate should really centre on the intensity of the violence.

In the older Commonwealth countries, violence is never an equation in their elections. This is what many would want to see happening in Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa.

Zimbabwe has opened its chequebook in seeking the assistance of lobbyists and consultancy firms, among them Cohen and Woods from the United States of America, and Dickens and Madson from Canada. The conduct of some of the election observers would seem to suggest Zimbabwe has more lobbyists than it has publicly declared.

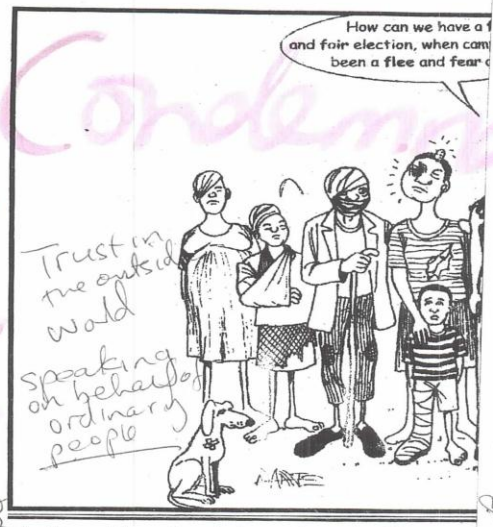
But when Africans are prepared to place so little value on human life, it is no wonder the rest of the world demonstrates fatigue or gives up on the plight of the continent.

It is ironic that when the world was focusing attention on Bosnia and Kosovo, it was accused of ignoring Africa. Yet when it repeatedly points out Africa's shortcomings it is accused of seeking to recolonise the continent.

What seems to be emerging is a pattern, among African leaders, of protecting their peers at the expense of their citizens. This is a tragedy of the modern-day rulers of the continent. They are so contemptuous of the people that they only find them useful either in bussing or herding them to polling stations so that they become part of an elaborate charade employed to validate their greed to continue ruling their countries.

International organisations such as the Commonwealth or the Southern African Development Community do not help when all they are pre-occupied with is outdoing each other in ignoring tragic events unfolding right under their noses.

Published by: Associated Newspapers



After Savimbi, who is Dos S

'In truth there may n moral or ideological between MPLA gener generals in enriching at the expense of the misery and exploitati huge natural resourc

BY TAJUDEEN ABI

I MUST confess that when a journalist friend rang to inform me about "the good news" of Dr Jonas Savimbi's death I was very cautious.

I grilled my friend, as would a serious crime scene filing his or her first information report (FIR).

My amateur policing effort was dictated by too many similar reports in the past prematurely announcing the death of Savimbi, only for his "ghost" to rise again with more vengeance and menace against the people and government of Angola.

I was not sure that two Fridays ago was not yet another one of his many rumoured deaths that had made the man acquire more lives than the proverbial cat with nine lives.

Several hours later the death was confirmed by many sources and by the following Sunday his corpse was displayed on global media.

It was unmistakable.

The man believed by many of his captive peasant followers to possess so much supernatural powers that he could turn himself into an owl and fly off to finish any enemy anywhere in the world was indeed dead.

I must admit that for the second time in the last four years I had a very unAfrican reaction to death. Culturally we are not expected to rejoice at the death of another human being even if the dead was a universal villain. The ancestors have to give us discount on some of these villains. They simply do not deserve our sympathy.

Savimbi's death put me in the same frame of mind as I was on past 27 years to an end?

My optimistic political will said "yes", but my intellectual pessimism merely shrugged "let's see". Both are not unrealistic.

To the extent that a human being can represent, epitomise and embody the worst possible traits of a nation's nightmare, Dr Jonas (this even rhymes with the biblical Judas!) was archetypal. He represented one of the ugliest African faces of the Cold War, reactionary African nationalism, political opportunism and naked personal ambition and greed in all shapes and sizes.

He was one of those early nationalists who purely because of personal ambition to move into the palatial seats of government being vacated by colonialists were willing to sacrifice everything and anybody.

When he did not realise his ambition he preferred to burn, destroy and sabotage the country for the rest of his life.

Appendix 1.12

Police warn MDC-T against violence

Herald Reporters

POLICE yesterday warned MDC-T youth assembly chairperson Mr Solomon Madzore against making reckless utterances aimed at fomenting violence ahead of harmonised elections slated for July 31.

Mr Madzore — who along with 28 other MDC-T youths, is out on bail for the alleged murder of Police Inspector Petros Mutedza in 2011 — told his party's star rally at Rudhaka Stadium on Sunday that MDC-T youths were prepared to take up arms and shed blood for the party's cause during the elections.

MDC-T has been implicated in several violent incidents countrywide that analysts said were designed to not only trash the political environment, but to create self-fulfilling prophecies ahead of the party's pending defeat in the harmonised elections.

The terror campaign began last year, but was intensified from January, with over 48 cases being recorded countrywide since the beginning of the year.

In all the recorded cases, MDC-T supporters were at the forefront of attacking their colleagues or those from other political parties, especially Zanu-PF.

Journalists were also not spared.

Mashudu Netsianda of Chronicle and Herbert Moyo of The Zimbabwe Independent fell victim to MDC-T thugs in separate incidents in Harare and Bulawayo.

The attacks on journalists followed threats issued by MDC-T leader Mr Morgan Tsvangirai, who rapped journalists and media houses that do not toe his party line, saying they had no future in his perceived "new Zimbabwe".

Police chief spokesperson Senior Assistant Commissioner Charity Charamba said Mr Madzore was straining the patience of police to its limit.

"Solomon Madzore and indeed others of his ilk are warned that this should be the last time that such and similar utterances meant to incite violence are made," said Snr Asst Comm Charamba.

"May all political parties and individuals be warned that the ZRP (Zimbabwe Republic Police) will not hesitate to bring to book individuals and/or political party leaders who make statements likely to incite violence at a time when the country is enjoying a peaceful and tranquil environment."

People like Madzore, said Snr Asst Comm Charamba, make criminal utterances, yet they would be quick to allege that there was selective application of the law when the police move in to arrest them.

Zanu-PF national chairman Cde Simon Khaya-Moyo described Mr Madzore's statements as irresponsible and uncalled for, particularly at this time when the country is gearing for harmonised elections on July 31.

Cde Khaya-Moyo was speaking during a meeting with Human Rights Watch executive director for Africa, Mr Daniel Bekele, who was accompanied by the Non Governmental Organisation's Zimbabwean representative, Mr Dhewa Mavhinga.

"Just yesterday (Sunday) we heard MDC-T youth leader calling for war, that we are ready to shed blood and we wondered what blood is there to shed, we have shed enough blood during the liberation struggle, we are now a sovereign state, we freed our country and we are now enjoying peace," said Cde Khaya Moyo.

It was critical, said Cde Khaya-Moyo, for political leaders to exercise restraint ahead of the elections.

"This is a very serious matter. We never thought anybody would talk of shedding blood, castigating war veterans, that nobody was born a war veteran, the very liberators being castigated publicly, challenging your own liberators," said Cde Khaya-Moyo.

Mr Bekele also criticised Mr Madzore, saying such utterances were uncalled for ahead of elections.

Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association chairman Cde Jabulani Sibanda said Mr Madzore's utterances depicted the violent nature of MDC-T.

"We cannot accept terrorism in our country and now that they have said it, we are not alarmed as yet because we know this is backed by activities happening behind scenes," said Cde Sibanda.

"We are looking forward to a peaceful election and we do not want war in Zimbabwe but if it is caused, the people of Zimbabwe will stand and fight.

"What happened in Libya, Egypt and Syria is a picture of the agenda of the same imperialists who are assisting MDC-T."

Mr Madzore's utterances, Cde Sibanda said, came after MDC-T realised they were going to lose in the forthcoming elections.

Zimbabwe Children of Freedom Fighters spokesperson Mr Liberty Bizure said: "President Mugabe has called for peace many times, but for one to agitate for violence at this time is unfortunate and it can be summed that it is a well calculated move bent on causing instability."

Zimbabwe Entrepreneurs Youth Action president Mr James Pande said the words clearly show that MDC-T contains representatives of Western war mongers.

Phone: All departments 795771; news 702877; display advertisements 795771; classified adv

Appendix 1.13

The Herald >> Friday 12 July 2013

Comment

The Herald

Established 1891

Madzore must remember he is out on bail

It is said fire once teased snarls all the way to ash. The wisdom of this adage is lost on MDC-T youth leader Solomon Madzore who was sabre-rattling at his party's rally in Marondera earlier this week.

What is Madzore, who is on bail on charges of murdering a police inspector, and his MDC-T really up to?

Madzore, and 28 other MDC-T youths stand accused of killing police Inspector Petros Mutedza in Glen View in 2011.

One would have thought the 14 months Madzore spent behind bars would have taught him a lesson.

While we might not want to delve into the murder allegations because they are sub judice, Madzore forces us to formulate opinions about the allegations.

We think that threatening to take up arms against the people is going too far for Madzore.

We also wonder why he thinks taking up the arms is as easy as making the threats.

But then, Madzore's utterances fall within the scope of what his party stands for.

What has the MDC-T achieved since its formation, except for inviting violence upon the people first in the form of sanctions, then destructive engagement?

The MDC-T is a party whose foundations are rooted in violence and the evidence is there for all to see.

The violence does not only start with the likes of Madzore, it is entrenched within the party's hierarchy, starting with its leader Mr Morgan Tsvangirai who has been fingered several times in intra-party probes.

Take the following statement for instance: "What we would like to tell Mugabe today is please go peacefully. If you don't want to go peacefully, we will remove you violently".

This was way back on September 30 2000 when Mr Tsvangirai made the remarks at Rufaro Stadium during a rally to mark the party's first anniversary.

In the years that followed, Mr Tsvangirai belittled them for daring to fight to liberate the country.

Well, we might want to attribute Madzore's utterances to youthfulness but then this man is three years shy of 40, he should know better. If he has any of the brains promised the grasshopper, he should apologise to the nation. Zimbabwe can ill-afford such barbarism.

If it was true that Zimbabwe lacks democracy, Madzore could by now be wailing behind bars for treason and making public threats to start a war.

We are not really impressed with Madzore and his party's threats of war at a time other political parties like Zanu-PF are busy counselling their supporters to desist from violence.

As a youth leader, Madzore must not fool his colleagues in the MDC-T into believing that taking arms is an easy task.

We know that MDC-T is determined to spoil the prevailing peaceful environment in a bid to not only trash the political environment, but to also provide fodder for its Western allies to discredit the poll.

The party has since unleashed a wave of intra- and inter-party political violence ahead of the elections.

And the statistics are really shocking.

Nearly 50 cases of political violence committed since January are attributed by the police to MDC-T.

In all the recorded cases, MDC-T supporters were at the forefront of attacking their colleagues or those from other political parties, especially Zanu-PF.

The party ended up suspending some primary elections and the verification process for its legislators in parts of the country as the violence escalated.

Journalists have also not been spared, with Mashudu Netsianda of Chronicle and Herbert Moyo of The Zimbabwe Independent falling victim to MDC-T thugs in separate incidents in Harare and Bulawayo in recent months.

Again Mr Tsvangirai was at the forefront of inciting his supporters to attack journalists

Appendix 1.14

APPENDIX 1.14
1 JUNE 2008 P P6 Comment

The Sunday Mail

COMMENT

MDC-T's violent campaign should stop

AS the electorate prepares for the decisive June 27 Presidential run-off, a disturbing feature to emerge is violence.

Last week President Mugabe and the First Lady Amai Grace Mugabe were in Shamva where they heard first-hand accounts from victims of politically motivated violence. Victims have been maimed or even killed and homes have been reduced to ashes.

"The MDC-T should stop immediately this barbaric campaign of arson, destroying and harming people, destroying lives," said President Mugabe, who was saddened by what he had seen.

What boggles the mind is why these perpetrators of violence have gone that berserk to the extent of harming their neighbours or even close relatives just because they support a different political party. In fact, in some cases politics is only used as a camouflage to settle personal scores or petty jealousies.

What they forget is that an election is an event and in this case after June 27 there won't be another run-off. But your neighbours remain your neighbours and your relative remains your relative.

After the dust has settled down in Kenya, we are sure those responsible for harming their neighbours now see

The strategy here appears to portray the run-off as being already tilted in Zanu-PF and President Mugabe's favour because the playing field is uneven. However, this trick by the Western backers of MDC-T is well known, hence the presence of neutral observers to witness the voting process.

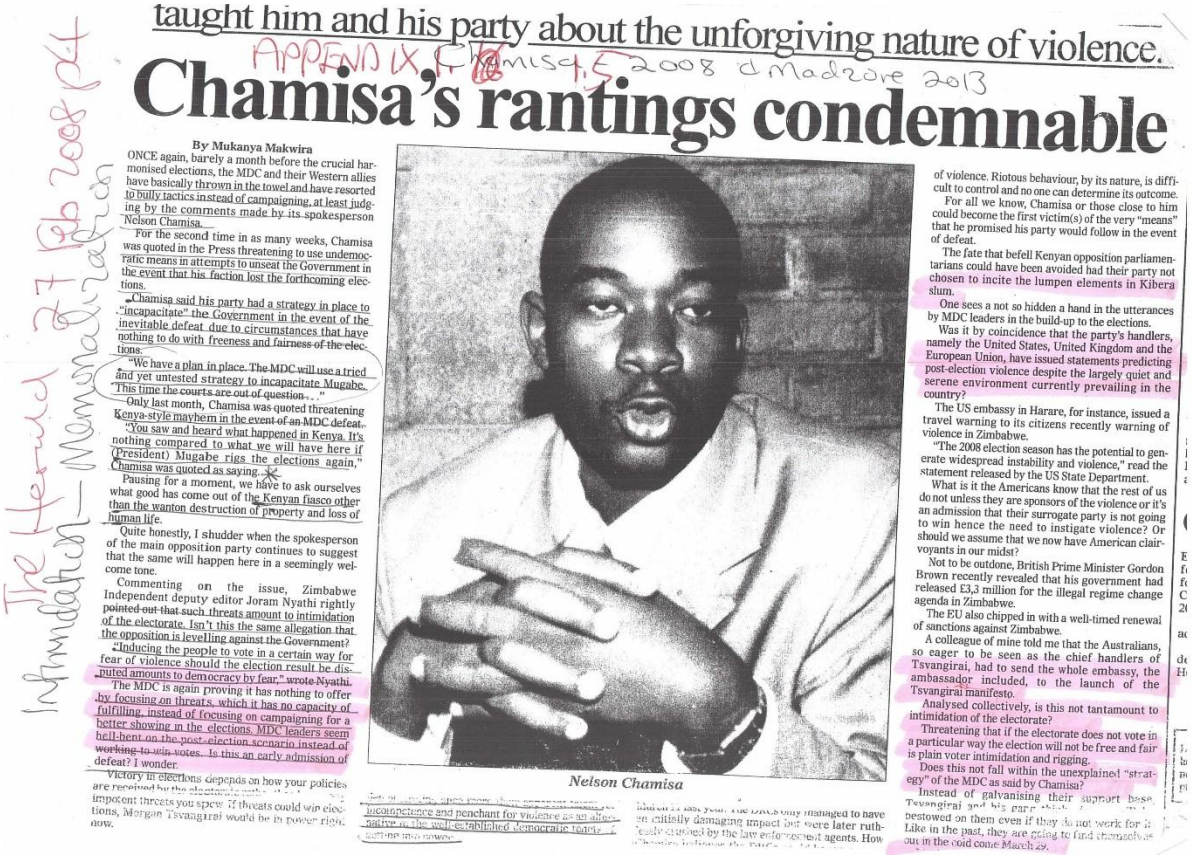
In the likely event that MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai is beaten in the run-off, Britain and America will be in the forefront in dismissing the result as being illegitimate, citing violence.

Elsewhere in this edition, we carry harrowing episodes of violence being carried out in the Buhera North constituency by sadistic gangs linked to MDC-T. It's horrendous.

With the inevitable involvement of the West, in their grand design to usher in Tsvangirai by hook or by crook, we suspect the involvement of a third force in this campaign of violence. This is a force that seems sustained by huge cash injections, whose brief is to spread violence.

No wonder we have had Mr Gordon Brown so eager to see the Zimbabwean case brought to the United Nations Security Council. The West is likely to use this violence as justification for forcing the Security Council to be interested in the goings-on in Zimbabwe.

Appendix 1.15



taught him and his party about the unforgiving nature of violence.

Chamisa's rantings condemnable

By Mukanya Makwira

ONCE again, barely a month before the crucial harmonised elections, the MDC and their Western allies have basically thrown in the towel and have resorted to bully tactics instead of campaigning, at least judging by the comments made by its spokesperson Nelson Chamisa.

For the second time in as many weeks, Chamisa was quoted in the Press threatening to use undemocratic means in attempts to unseat the Government in the event that his faction lost the forthcoming elections.

Chamisa said his party had a strategy in place to "incapacitate" the Government in the event of the inevitable defeat due to circumstances that have nothing to do with freeness and fairness of the elections.

"We have a plan in place. The MDC will use a tried and yet untested strategy to incapacitate Mugabe. This time the courts are out of question..."

Only last month, Chamisa was quoted threatening Kenya-style mayhem in the event of an MDC defeat.

"You saw and heard what happened in Kenya. It's nothing compared to what we will have here if (President) Mugabe rigs the elections again," Chamisa was quoted as saying.

Pausing for a moment, we have to ask ourselves what good has come out of the Kenyan fiasco other than the wanton destruction of property and loss of human life.

Quite honestly, I shudder when the spokesperson of the main opposition party continues to suggest that the same will happen here in a seemingly welcome tone.

Commenting on the issue, Zimbabwe Independent deputy editor Joram Nyathi rightly pointed out that such threats amount to intimidation of the electorate. Isn't this the same allegation that the opposition is levelling against the Government?

"Inducing the people to vote in a certain way for fear of violence should the election result be disputed amounts to democracy by fear," wrote Nyathi.

The MDC is again proving it has nothing to offer by focusing on threats, which it has no capacity of fulfilling, instead of focusing on campaigning for a better showing in the elections. MDC leaders seem hell-bent on the post-election scenario instead of working to win votes. Is this an early admission of defeat? I wonder.

Victory in elections depends on how your policies are received by the electorate, not on impotent threats you spew. If threats could win elections, Morgan Tsvangirai would be in power right now.

Nelson Chamisa

incompetence and penchant for violence as an alternative to the well established democratic norms

of violence. Riotous behaviour, by its nature, is difficult to control and no one can determine its outcome.

For all we know, Chamisa or those close to him could become the first victim(s) of the very "means" that he promised his party would follow in the event of defeat.

The fate that befell Kenyan opposition parliamentarians could have been avoided had their party not chosen to incite the lumpen elements in Kibera slum.

One sees a not so hidden a hand in the utterances by MDC leaders in the build-up to the elections.

Was it by coincidence that the party's handlers, namely the United States, United Kingdom and the European Union, have issued statements predicting post-election violence despite the largely quiet and serene environment currently prevailing in the country?

The US embassy in Harare, for instance, issued a travel warning to its citizens recently warning of violence in Zimbabwe.

"The 2008 election season has the potential to generate widespread instability and violence," read the statement released by the US State Department.

What is it the Americans know that the rest of us do not unless they are sponsors of the violence or it's an admission that their surrogate party is not going to win hence the need to instigate violence? Or should we assume that we now have American clairvoyants in our midst?

Not to be outdone, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown recently revealed that his government had released £3,3 million for the illegal regime change agenda in Zimbabwe.

The EU also chipped in with a well-timed renewal of sanctions against Zimbabwe.

A colleague of mine told me that the Australians, so eager to be seen as the chief handlers of Tsvangirai, had to send the whole embassy, the ambassador included, to the launch of the Tsvangirai manifesto.

Analysed collectively, is this not tantamount to intimidation of the electorate?

Threatening that if the electorate does not vote in a particular way the election will not be free and fair is plain voter intimidation and rigging.

Does this not fall within the unexplained "strategy" of the MDC as said by Chamisa?

Instead of galvanising their support base, Tsvangirai and his party [illegible] bestowed on them even if they do not work for it. Like in the past, they are going to find themselves out in the cold come March 29.

Appendix 1.16

APPENDIX XIX APPENDIX 1.16 The Herald 10 July 2013 P4

4

Crime & Courts

Don't make reckless political statements, Madzore warned

AN insult

Zvamaida Murwira
Senior Reporter

AIR Force of Zimbabwe Commander Air Marshal Perrance Shiri has warned MDC-T youth assembly chairperson Mr Solomon Madzore not to provoke security forces by making reckless political statements that had the potential of destabilising the country.

Air Marshal Shiri said Mr Madzore's statements to the effect that MDC-T youths were ready to shed blood if their party loses the elections was straining the patience of security forces to the limit.

Air Marshal Shiri, who was speaking at Musiyiwa Business Centre in Bindura where he was distributing goods to less-privileged people sourced under the AFZ Commander Charity Fund, said such statements, were inimical to the prevailing peaceful environment.

The warning comes in the wake of statements made by Mr Madzore at the launch of MDC-T's election campaign and manifesto in Marondera

security and all who waged the liberation struggle.

"Why are you insulting us? Haven't we laid our guns down and allowed people to live peacefully, do their work in harmony?

"Do not force us to do that which we did not want to do," Air Marshal Shiri said.

Turning to elections to be held on July 31, Air Marshal Shiri said people should campaign peacefully.

He told the villagers that they were mature enough to know what was good for them as black people and that they should desist from political violence.

"Political parties will come to you saying different things. Some will say we will give you land, mines so that you are empowered and cease to be beggars.

"Others would say we will source goodies for you from our friends abroad, when the goodies have been exhausted we will go back to our benefactors again.

"You are now mature people. You

Appendix 1.17

10 NEWSDAY FRIDAY JULY 19, 2013

ND EDITORIAL

APPENDIX 1.17

NEWSDAY

EVERYDAY NEWS FOR EVERYDAY PEOPLE

19 JULY 2013

How sincere are Mugabe's calls?

ON Tuesday, President Robert Mugabe was in Chitungwiza where he addressed a rally attended by thousands of his supporters at Chibuku Stadium.

His message there was clear – peace begins with me, peace begins with you, peace begins with all of us. As the nation surges towards a watershed election in which stakes are unquestionably high, it was indeed a timely message with maturity, coming from Zanu PF's most senior official.

It is a message the President has been preaching at virtually all his gatherings in a bid to ensure political tolerance and a violence-free poll, different from the mayhem witnessed in 2008 when brother turned against brother and butchered each other for supporting rival parties.

However, a mere 24 hours after Mugabe's Chitungwiza rally, an ugly scenario erupted. Seven MDC-T officials, believing in the peace message the President had just preached, were brutally attacked, allegedly for putting up campaign posters and distributing pamphlets at a housing settlement established by Zanu PF aspiring parliamentary candidate, Christopher Chigumba. Some sustained serious injuries which saw them admitted at a local hospital, but most of the perpetrators reportedly went away scot-free.

Is Mugabe speaking white, but acting black, indicating left and turning right, preaching peace, but acting war? Or has he lost control of Zanu PF and his grassroots supporters no longer take him seriously – a sign that may signal Mugabe, turning 90 next February, is now a spent force rumbling what no longer resonates with the thinking of his followers?

Violence in any form ahead of elections is intolerable and both the President and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai have been making passionate calls to their supporters to be tolerant for the country to hold peaceful polls.

Over the weekend, Tsvangirai warned his youth leaders Solomon Madzore and Promise Mkwananzi against making reckless statements which may trigger violence. This was after Madzore had told a rally in Marondera early this month that as youths they were prepared to shed their blood for the former trade unionist, a statement which Mkwananzi went on to support.

Grandstanding and preaching mixed messages should not be condoned in any circumstances. It is the hope of many that local, regional and international election observers currently in the country will keep a close eye on these developments and give correct reports regarding violence.

The 2008 presidential election runoff was marred by violence which saw Tsvangirai pulling out, culminating in an inclusive government – definitely not the best deal for Zimbabweans who deserve to be led by a single party that wins an election.

With two weeks to go before the harmonised elections, Zimbabweans only hope and deserve a peaceful poll and calls by leaders should be respected and observed.

Appendix 2.1: Political Map of Zimbabwe